Two Dead Men

by Jens Anker

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A descriptive circular of all Mr. Fletcher's mystery stories will be mailed upon request.

TWO DEAD MEN

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH OF
JENS ANKER
BY FRITHJOF TOKSVIG

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TWO DEAD MEN

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PROLOGUE

ABOUT 9 o'clock one spring evening, Thorvald Hansen, a small humpbacked cobbler, was putting a room in order at the back of his basement shop in Saxo street. The window was covered by an old, ragged rug heavy with dirt. It looked up into a funnel of a court, one of a whole line of courts stretching up to Dannebrog street.

A lamp with a chipped shade burned on the bare pine table. Two crippled chairs with ragged cloth seats were placed beside it. An unmade bed was visible in the rear of the room, a rusty iron skeleton filled with a heap of filthy rags. The cobbler's father, the "Old One," as they called him, had flung himself upon it and was snoring off the effects of a recent drinking bout. Ordinarily he occupied a room up in the garret.

The air in the room was close and oppressive, due partly to the Old One's exhalations, and partly to the tobacco in the cobbler's well-chewed

briar-pipe. A framed motto over the bed expressed the pious wish that God would hold His Hand over this Home.

The cobbler had now swept the dust and dirt into the corners and brushed the bread crumbs off the table. He put the broom away outside in the shop.

His father was tossing in an uneasy sleep—and snored. The cobbler lounged over to him and suddenly clapped a hand on his shoulder and began shaking him:

"They may be here any minute now."

The old man half woke and wrenched himself away.

"Let me alone, d'ye hear—"

"No, I'll be damned if I will—" and the son gripped him again.

"Then give me just a little drop—" begged the old man, and raised himself on his elbow, "I am so thirsty."

The cobbler did not loose his hold. But an evil smile slipt over his pallid, fatty countenance under the parted coal black hair. His eyes became fixed. His brutal jaw with its blue-black stubble tightened like a muscle.

"Certainly, my dear sir,—anything you like—That's just what I'm here for, you know."

He grinned sarcastically, evilly. But there was a furious strength in his hands as with a sudden snatch at the old man's shoulder, he tore him out of bed:

"Get out of that!"

Hansen straightened the rags that served as bedclothes. The Old One got up laboriously, dragged himself over to one of the chairs and slumped down on it, slapped his arms on the table, and hid his face in his hands.

"Don't tip over that lamp," barked the cobbler as he knocked his pipe out on the stove over by the bed and filled it anew. The Old One sat swaying and groaning. The cobbler grinned maliciously.

"There is always a worm in the core, eh?"

The Old One suddenly took his hands away from his face, blinked at the light and looked about. First recognizingly, then surprised, then disapprovingly.

"Why is everything tidied up so this evening?"

"Because we are going to have company,"—grinned his offspring.

Slowly the old man remembered.

"Ah, that is true! Elly and her new intended are coming."

" 'Intended!' " the cobbler leered. "It won't

last long, I'll bet. She's a flighty one, is Elly. She likes variety. He's a queer bird, anyway."

"A genius they say," grunted the old man.

"Genius—yes, so she thinks. He's only a printer, he is, and he hasn't even got a job. It'll be hard going if they're going to live by his trade."

The Old One nodded and cleared his throat.

"Right you are, m'boy! Right you are—a-ah, my throat!—If you only—"

He looked beseechingly at his son who sat on the edge of the bed.

"Hey?" asked that worthy crossly.

"—could spare me a little drop—"

"What are you whining for now?" demanded the cobbler with a leer even more evil, if possible, than before.

"You'll not get a drop to drink!"

A sudden rage seized the old man. He banged the table with his fist and threateningly endeavoured to get up, but could only wave his arms wildly.

"Do you know whom you are talking to?" he gasped. "What, rogue—a man with whom His Majes—"

"Yes, yes, I know very well that His Majesty shook hands with you," interrupted his son. "I know the whole lesson. But even if the Pope him-

self had kissed you, you wouldn't get another drop. I don't want you any more drunk than you are already. D'ye see?"

He had been rapping his pipe on the edge of the bed to keep time to his words. . . . The Old One had completely missed his heroic oration. He simply sat and stared dully at the table.

"I am an old man, whom His Majesty—" he whimpered.

The cobbler rose and bent threateningly over him.

"What are you muttering about?" he rasped.

Just then they heard a noise at the door to the shop. They both froze and listened. Then came a series of knocks.

The cobbler breathed easier.

"It's Elly's knock," he said and gave his father a push in the ribs. "Straighten up now a bit. D'ye hear?"

The Old One obeyed and the cobbler went into the dark shop. Before he opened the door he asked:

"Who's there?"

"It's me, Elly," he heard his sister say, "and my friend."

Then Thorvald Hansen undid the door.

"God's peace and welcome," he bleated loudly.

"Cut out the play acting," said Elly. "Nielsen knows you from hearsay. Yes, he's here, too."

Nielsen greeted him and went with Elly and the cobbler into the back room.

"The Salvation Army often have people out here in the street," grinned the cobbler to his sister, "and souls must be saved. That is why I laid it on a bit thick."

Nielsen ignored the cobbler's outstretched hand.

Thorvald Hansen regarded him covertly. His appearance was anything but prepossessing. He was tall, slender but broad-shouldered. His thick brown hair was uncombed, and he wore eye-glasses that seemed rooted to his nose but that did not in the least obscure the glances from his keen eyes. He was vilely unshaven, and his brutal mouth was extremely disfigured by several long, yellow front teeth which hung tusk-like over his lower lip.

And as for his clothes—the cobbler was really almost ashamed on his sister's account, when he saw the dirty paper collar and dickey, the long shabby Prince Albert, the greasy vest and the baggy and wrinkled blue trousers badly frayed at the bottom.

Not to speak of cuffs, which were missing.

His boots were the only decent thing about him, and even they were patched. And his tie, too, was worn and spoke of better days.

And Elly, who could play around with counts if she wished. That one could sink so low! And worse yet, she was in love with him.

"Nielsen has brought some cognac along," said Elly and threw her hat and coat on the bed.

The cobbler smiled oilily and offered Nielsen one of the lame chairs.

"I will fetch some glasses," he promised and disappeared in the kitchen.

"Nielsen has brought two bottles so we had better start in," said Elly.

The Old One's eyes gleamed a bit, bleared though they were.

"A little night-cap," he mumbled feelingly and turned suddenly toward the daughter, and gestured majestically with his hand.

"Your father is proud of you," he said.

"Nonsense," smiled Elly. She was junoesque, golden-haired, and fresh as if she had lived a life among sunlight and flowers.

The cobbler returned with three glasses. What was just right for three, was too little for four. Elly poured her portion into a cup.

"Welcome, brother-in-law," toasted the cobbler, "and good luck to it."

"Luck to it," seconded the Old One.

They drank. Nielsen refilled the empty glasses.

"Is this all there is to the place," he asked and his keen glances darted around the room and into the darkened store.

"There is a little kitchen outside," and the cobbler indicated it with a gesture that he sought to make superior. Nielsen irritated him. There was something curt, almost commanding about him.

"Let me see this kitchen," said the printer. The cobbler emptied his glass, and got up and opened the door to the kitchen.

"This is all there is of it," he said.

The room was small and pitch dark.

Nielson lit a match and looked about. There was a little window on the court, thick with dust and dirt. He tried the door to the kitchen stairs. It was locked.

"Is it sound proof?" he asked and pointed to the ceiling.

"As the grave," affirmed Hansen and added: "You are a careful man, brother-in-law."

"Yes, careful," smiled Nielsen with a nod, "but not afraid, as are some others who daren't open

the door for their own sister, for fear that it might be a detective."

"You haven't three years behind you, brother," grumbled the cobbler, "and I don't want to do it again, the devil take me. It's a real hell for my lungs." The cobbler coughed.

"Isn't the Old One going soon?" asked Nielsen.

"I'll get him on his way," promised the cobbler.

"Let's go in again," said the printer.

As they stepped into the back-room, the Old One stood swaying with the cognac bottle in his hand, and had nearly emptied it. Elly was ready to die with laughter at him.

"God! how delightful he is! He drank it as if it was fresh milk."

Hansen tore the flask from his hand.

"The old swine," he snapped.

"Put him on the bed," proposed Nielsen, and examined the shop carefully.

The cobbler and Elly dragged the Old One over to the bed.

"—A man, with whom His Majesty has talked and—" muttered the cobbler's worthy father.

Elly giggled.

"Now he is serving that up to us again."

They threw him onto the bed.

"What kind of a cupboard is this?" they heard Nielsen say out in the shop.

The cobbler went out and opened the cupboard. It was empty.

"Be so good as to look, brother-in-law," said he and then slammed it demonstratively shut. "Either you are an amateur or else pretty damn careful."

"Suppose I were both," said Nielsen laughing shortly.

"Then I should fear," answered the cobbler somewhat scornfully, "that we would not make so many *coups* together, such as you have proposed to me through Elly."

"If you are not too much of a coward, we shall start this very evening," said Nielsen, "and there's big money to be made."

They had gone into the back-room again and had seated themselves about the table. Elly filled their glasses. Now and then as she looked at Nielsen, there came into her eyes a gleam as of unveiled and passionate love—and of anxiety.

The cobbler looked down into his glass.

"It is all right about the money," he remarked, "and both the shoe business and the straight and narrow is not worth that! There's nothing in it

—I can't make it go that way. But I won't get in again. I'll croak if I get shut up."

"You won't get shut up," said Nielsen shortly. "When you work with me, you risk nothing."

"May I ask then, why you don't work alone?" asked the cobbler suspiciously.

Nielsen slowly emptied his glass.

"I'll tell you why. This work demands both body and soul. And I can offer the soul only."

The cobbler whistled in comprehensive irony.

"You mean then, that I should face the music if things go wrong. Fine. All you'd have to do would be to lie your way out of it. Or have I misunderstood you?"

Nielsen shrugged his shoulders.

"In one way you've misunderstood me, in another, no. I will be the brain, and you shall be the hands that untie the hard knots. You'll get half the swag.

"But mark you—if you try to bunko or double-cross me, you'll find it'll go hard with you. I have a certain, dead-sure way for handling that kind of case"—Hansen rather squirmed in his chair, and opened his mouth as though to speak, but was silent.

"But perhaps you would rather work entirely on

your own, or with your pals of the old days. It is, of course, a bit risky, but—"

The printer did not finish. He sat and watched Hansen with his peculiar look, that seemed to bore through one.

The cobbler had always had bad luck when he worked alone, though a clever man in his own line, and he had long ago parted from his comrades.

Therefore he said simply: "I agree."

Nielsen nodded curtly.

"You are a sensible man, Hansen."

Over in the bed, the Old One stirred.

"—A man whom His Majesty—" he mumbled and began again his lusty snoring.

"We start tonight, then?" said the cobbler and emptied his glass.

"Yes, now, tonight," replied Nielsen in a queer ceremonious way. His eyes met Elly's for an instant. Her eyes fell.

"Well, out with it," harried the cobbler.

Nielsen leaned whisperingly towards him.

"Now, get this carefully—"

He talked for a long time, often interrupted by the cobbler. Elly listened closely, and with deeply interested eyes. Now and then she sipped at her glass.

The light from the chipped shade fell remorse-

lessly upon the three set and tense faces, so dissimilar, and yet so alike in criminal ecstasy.

. . . . . .

A short time afterward a burglary was committed in one of Copenhagen's best-known jewellery concerns, which in a month's time was followed by another.

During the summer and autumn four more robberies occurred, quite as mysterious as the first, evidently executed by the same criminals. The police were at a loss either to prevent them, or to find any solution when they occurred.

Then the robberies suddenly ceased.

CHAPTER 1

A STORM had been raging over the city all afternoon and evening.

Arne Falk sat writing. It was late. Suddenly the outer door-bell rang. He looked up from his work, glancing at the clock. It was half-past eleven. His house-keeper and the maid had gone to bed long ago.

He laid the manuscript, some notes on criminal statistics, aside, and went out to open the door.

It was Preben Miller, the author.

"Good evening," said Falk with a smile, "I thought you were terribly angry with me."

"Oh, because of that note you wouldn't indorse?" said Miller, hanging up his hat and stick. "Bosh! A little thing like that doesn't bother me."

"Thank the Lord," sighed Falk ironically, "but come in where it's warm."

Miller followed him.

"I come, really," he said, "to take you along on a slumming tour. My 'Darkest Copenhagen' lacks a chapter with the heading 'Behind the Scenes in the Dance Hells,' or something like that. And Figaro is wide open tonight."

Falk looked at him in comic despair.

"You're much too greedy! For the last nine months I've been introducing you to all the crooks of Copenhagen who amount to anything. You know their hiding places and all their tricks. And now you want the dregs of the dance halls too!

"Let's put it off till another evening, old fellow. Let's have a little whisky and a talk here instead. Why it's snowing and storming outside, worse than it ever did in any self-respecting December!"

Miller lit a cigar.

"It stopped snowing half an hour ago," he said. "The storm has let up too."

Falk looked out. It was moonlight with a crackling frost.

"And where's your overcoat?" he demanded, turning to his friend.

"I'm toughening myself," smiled the writer, and straightened his rather stooping shoulders, "and besides my winter coat is in hock somewhere. I have only my old one to wear, and I hate like the deuce to risk my reputation as the best dressed man in town. We all have our little weaknesses."

Falk put out the light.

"You are a silly ass," he said to Miller, pulling on his overcoat. "You're one of the best of our

myriad scribblers, and you're as prolific as a rat—"

"—and in spite of that always broke," continued Miller with a sigh, and went down the stairs followed by Falk.

"And why?" asked the latter.

"Ask my tailor and my favourite waiter," said Miller languidly. He had an odd, lazy way of speaking, and gave the general impression of being rather easy-going.

"And your uncles," Falk went on, "and your women."

"Suppose we stop there," suggested Miller. "Anyway, you're a good one to preach."

Falk ignored the insinuation.

"Why don't you make a good match?" he asked.

Miller smiled, so that his gleaming white but false front teeth were visible. His own had been knocked out in a coasting accident at Dalarne in Sweden.

"Why? Now you are talking. Who in the wide world would have me?"

"Ada Stock, for example. There are others besides myself who have been hoping that you two would make a match of it. She is the daughter of your late father's best friend—you have known each other from childhood, and then, Captain Stock is quite wealthy—"

"I, too—" sighed Miller, "hoped one time—well, you know.

"She has, you see, become engaged today. Not that my heart is broken. But undeniably it is, what one in certain circles—which you have done me the honour of acquainting me with—would call a black eye."

"Whom is she engaged to?" asked Falk with surprise.

"To Lange, Einar Lange."

"Oh, the Futurist! How did he meet the Stocks?"

"Well, Ada has artistic leanings. She has studied under him. He told me himself about the engagement this very evening. I took a little run up to see old Saabye. Lange came just as I was about to leave."

"Isn't Saabye his foster-father?"

"Yes, he has been a father to him since Lange at seventeen entered the Academy, which he now so heartily detests."

"Wasn't there a bit of a row between them about a year ago?"

"Yes, Lange wanted to marry a girl who did not suit his foster-father's taste. And Saabye isn't the man to keep his opinions to himself. There is nothing wrong with his intellect either.

"The girl had the lad going pretty strong, was pretty expensive, and a Vestal Virgin she certainly was not! Old Saabye prophesied that it would come to no good, and said right out that if Einar was bound on making himself a laughing-stock he was not going to do it on his money at any rate, etc., etc."

"And did Lange rage?"

"Of course! He was young, barely thirty, and as temperamental as a Southerner. He told Saabye to go to the Devil."

"But he didn't marry the girl, then?"

"No, she didn't really care for him anyway. When he couldn't get any more money out of the old man, she gave him the gate. And Lange didn't commit suicide on her account."

"Who was she?" asked Falk.

"A child of the people," smiled Miller. "Genuine Saxo street. But a remarkable woman, with an uncanny attractiveness to men. Large, blooming, and blond. And with the same shining fresh exterior that a worm-eaten fruit can have—"

"You seem to know her," smiled Falk.

"Yes, indeed, I do. Of course, I can't think of her as a wife but—"

"What is her name?"

"Elly! Elly Hansen—strictly lower-class—As a matter of fact, she's behaving quite well lately, and I flatter myself that I am the cause of it.

"God help me, I think she's in love with me, old man."

"Yes, miracles still happen," smiled Falk a little maliciously.

They turned down Vesterbro's Passage.

"And so Lange is all fixed with Ada Stock," continued Falk, "and does the match suit the old man?"

"Yes, he is all sunshine. Old Saabye, that is. Because Stock senior is probably less enthusiastic about it. He counts only army officers as human beings, and understands absolutely nothing of Futurism."

"Neither do I, thank the Lord," interjected Falk.

"And even if Lange," continued Miller, "has talent (as he, as a matter-of-fact, is said to have! What young painter is not full of talent?) he doesn't earn very much by it.

"I can't help wondering," he remarked almost peevishly, "how a cool lady like Ada Stock can go and fall in love with an anarchistic individual like Lange who goes around with baggy trousers and no cuffs."

Falk smiled.

"Do the Stocks know anything about Lange's former relation to Elly Hansen?"

"Are you mad?" Miller stared at him, astounded. "Yes, Ada, maybe, or the mother at a pinch! But the father! He is as prudish as an old maid. His ideas about I. O. U.'s, and the erotic are on a par with the moral standards of a Ladies' Aid Society."

"Isn't he a bit stingy, too?"

"Stingy! That's not the word for it," said Miller, shaking his head in denial.

"His wife fights a constant battle to get enough money to run the house. But when it comes to militarism, then his generosity borders on the insane. If I judge him right, Lange himself will have to pay for the whole outfitting, unless he wants machine-guns in the living room and cannon in the bed chamber."

"Maybe you can introduce him to your money-lenders," laughed Falk.

"Oh, no, I have more than use for them myself," sighed Miller and a shudder passed through him. "Besides,—I am freezing."

They had reached the corner of the street where Preben Miller lived.

"Run up and put your coat on," Falk advised him. "I'll wait for you."

Miller reflected. Falk smiled a bit scornfully.

"You won't meet any of your imposing acquaintances tonight."

Miller still hesitated:

"I really cast it off a year ago. And the cut is quite out of style—oh, well, the deuce with it!"

He unlocked the door and went in. Falk went back and forth in front of the house. There were only a few people on the street, and the moonlight made it seem still more deserted, the snow still whiter.

He sauntered over to the other side, saw a light flare up in his friend's room, and go out an instant afterwards. Four or five minutes passed. Then Miller opened the door. Falk went over to him. When he reached his side, the author began to tremble in spite of his overcoat.

"It is the heat up in the apartment," he said, "one reacts."

They went down Vesterbro street.

"Do you suppose the Captain will give his consent to the engagement?" Falk continued their interrupted conversation.

"He has already given it," said Miller and lit

a cigarette. "The engagement has been officially announced. You'll find it in the papers tomorrow, or the day after. You see, Ada has a wonderful way of handling the old man. She simply freezes him into obedience. You know, she's rather frigid."

"Her mother has helped her, too, probably?"

Miller shrugged his shoulders.

"She's very sweet, this Mrs. Stock, but she hasn't a word to say about anything."

"It reminds me of a proverb," said Falk, "that that woman is a goose who does not understand how to manage her husband."

"Yes, and the one that does not do it," continued Miller, "a saint. It so happens that she is neither."

"It's the daughter then—" began Falk but stopped short and gripped Miller by the arm. "Isn't that Lange?" he asked and pointed to a young man who had wrenched open the door of No. 12, and at that very instant passed them, in the middle of the road, running swiftly.

His clothes hung on him as if he had dressed in furious haste. His shoestrings were untied, his vest unbuttoned and his tie fluttered wildly. He was without his overcoat despite the frost.

"Yes, that's he," Miller broke out, astounded,

and looked after him. He was already down near Old Kingsway. "The Lord knows what's the matter with him. His face was quite pale—did you notice it?"

Falk nodded.

"Does Saabye live there?" he asked, and pointed to No. 12.

"Yes, and Lange was to stay there tonight on account of the bad weather," explained Miller. "He lives away out in Hellerup, and there are no taxis out tonight."

They stopped outside the street door. Miller stepped back several paces, and looked up. Everything was dark at Saabye's.

"He didn't even have time to light the hall-light," substantiated Falk.

"Let us go up," proposed Miller.

They went in by the front door. Falk lit the light. On one of the lower steps lay something which he bent over and picked up. He handed it to Miller.

"Do you recognize this?"

"That's his stick-pin. He must have lost it as he ran down the stairs."

"And why such wild haste?" grunted Falk, "and why did he seem so excited?"

The author shrugged his shoulders.

"Who knows?"

They went up the stairs. Falk examined every step without, however, finding anything.

Saabye lived on the second floor. When they had reached it, the hall-light went out. Falk lit it again. The hall door stood wide open.

"That's not at all like Saabye," said Miller, astonished, and shook his head.

Falk preceded him into the corridor. The door of the study was also open. They both saw the fire-light from the old-fashioned porcelain stove rest like a dull gold covering on the thick Smyrna carpet that reached almost to the threshold.

"Where's the switch?" asked Falk as he stepped into the room, followed by Miller.

The latter, accustomed to the house, turned it on. The room in an instant lay bathed in a cosy, dark yellow light. A bed had been made up on the sofa but the bedclothes lay in fantastic disorder, as if Lange, who doubtless had lain there, had been torn from his bed or else had left it in nervous haste.

"We'd better wake Saabye," said Falk. "Something or other has happened here. Where's his bedroom?"

Miller reflected a moment.

"I am not quite sure about it," he said, "because I have never been in any other room but this. But I think it is at the end of this corridor."

He opened the door to a long, carpeted hall, and found, after some searching, a switch there, and threw it on.

"Where does this door to the left lead to?" whispered Falk.

"Probably out to the kitchen, and to the housekeeper's rooms."

"And what is this?"

Falk pointed to a wire, which, quite independent of the lighting connection, ran along the ceiling to stop abruptly or rather disappear in the wall of the study.

"I don't know," and Miller shook his head. Bending over, he picked something up:

"Here is a knife."

He handed it to Falk. The blade was nicked as if it had been used to cut metal. Falk looked up and followed the mysterious wire with his eyes. By the door to the study—where Miller had found the knife, he discovered that the wire had been cut!

Falk's usually cheerful face became suddenly grave.

"Go out and lock the front door," he bade softly, "and take the key in with you. I will wake Saabye in the meantime."

Miller disappeared in the study. Falk again examined the wire where it had been cut. He carefully assured himself of its thickness, hardness and so on. He compared the wire with the knife and muttered, "That is strange." But finally he abandoned his reflections, and knocked on the door of Saabye's room first softly, then louder and louder.

No one answered.

Then he shouted: "Hello, Mr. Saabye!" and pounded on the door.

Still no answer.

Then he opened the door. Miller had in the meantime returned. Falk held him back.

"Stay out here."

Miller waited and saw Falk turn on the light in the bedroom. An instant later he heard him utter a low cry of horror. He rushed in—and recoiled horror-stricken.

Saabye lay murdered in his bed! With his throat cut from ear to ear.

"Ring up police headquarters and get some one down here, preferably Jensen-Skandrup, if he is there."

Miller staggered through the corridor into the study where the telephone was.

Falk bent over the dead man. He had been murdered beyond the slightest doubt. And the slash had been made by a sure hand. He had bled to death almost instantaneously.

Falk looked inquiringly about.

On the floor before the bureau lay Saabye's pocket knife, keys, and watch. The criminal had, no doubt, dropped them in his haste.

He looked at the watch. It had stopped at fifteen minutes of twelve. It was now twelve o'clock. A quarter of an hour ago Saabye had been murdered!

Falk examined the watch closely. To all appearances it had been wound for the night and had stopped only owing to the jar it had sustained when it fell.

He heard Miller come back, and appearing to hesitate as he stepped into the bedroom.

"They'll be here in a few minutes," he said, and avoided the corpse with his eyes.

Falk smiled involuntarily. Miller had always talked scornfully of people who could not stand blood nor the sight of a corpse.

"Here is a safe," said his friend.

Falk nodded.

"I was just about to look it over."

He examined it minutely. It was locked. Miller stood and stared at it. Falk noticed the sweat on his forehead, and how pale his face was.

"I think you had better—," he began but stopped suddenly with a: "Shh!"

Both were still. They heard a door creak out in the corridor leading to the bedroom. Falk tiptoed to the door—and stood face to face with a pudgy, elderly woman in negligee.

She moaned as she saw him. Her face became fixed and wooden with fright. To save her life she could not have moved a muscle.

Despite the tragedy behind him, Falk had to smile. His smile unlocked her terror. She shrieked.

"Thieves! Thieves! Help! Help!" she shrilled, and was about to disappear in the room behind her when Falk reassuringly put his hand on her arm:

"We are no thieves," said he, "we are friends of your master."

But she screamed steadily on: "Thieves!" and tore her arm away: "Help, help!"

Falk gripped her by the wrist.

"Stop your yelling now," he said. "You're the house-keeper, aren't you?"

She nodded wildly. Her eyes wandered irresolutely.

"A dreadful thing has happened," said Falk. Just then Miller appeared on the threshold of the bedroom.

"Shut the door," Falk said to him. Miller did so.

The house-keeper glanced at the door in terror. Then she shut her eyes, and seemed about to faint. Falk supported her.

"He is dead, my poor master is dead."

"How do you know that?" Falk looked at her sharply.

"I had a frightful dream," she groaned. "I was gathering up money. Heaps of money. In the mire and slush. That means misfortune. Oh, I knew it the minute I woke up. Misfortune on this house."

Falk tried to calm her.

"Didn't you hear any noise or screaming about a quarter of an hour ago?" he asked.

She again shook her head.

"Where is your bedroom?"

"'Way out by the kitchen," she stammered finally.

Suddenly she remembered and burst out apprehensively: "But Mr. Lange must have—"

"We met him running away from here as we came," Falk interrupted.

She stared horror-stricken at him.

"Running away! Running away!"

Falk nodded.

"He did it," she whispered suddenly and shuddered. "He did it."

"What makes you think that?"

"He has such a hasty temper. I'll never forget one night last year when he and the master quarreled. He all but struck him. I saw it myself, and thank God that he stayed away from here after that."

"But what makes you think that he should have gone so far just this very evening when he came to be reconciled to your master?"

The house-keeper's eyes still wavered from fright but she nodded secretively:

"He came up here for quite another reason."

"Which?"

"To borrow money of the master."

"And you think that your master refused? He wasn't ordinarily considered a stingy man."

The housekeeper, Mrs. Rosenkvist, hesitated a little before she answered.

"I think he did, however," she said. "Maybe he asked for too large a sum."

"Did your master usually keep large amounts of money here?" asked Falk.

"No, he always put it in the bank the same day that it was paid to him. You know, he owned this house, and the house next door, the poor dead master! But today he couldn't deposit it. He had a bit of a cold, and the weather was so dreadful. Oh, God! Oh, God!" she moaned in her frightened way again and stared fearfully at the bedroom door. There was a slight pause.

"Do you know the combination for the safe?" Falk asked suddenly.

She started as if he had touched an open wound. She could only nod affirmatively.

"Perhaps you have put money in it for your master now and then?" asked Falk. She nodded again.

"Do you know Lange?"

She nodded for the third time.

"Do you know where the keys are?"

"Yes," she managed to say: "The master always carried them in his pocket, the poor, poor—"

Falk opened the door to the bedroom.

"Do me the favour," he bade her, "of opening the safe for us."

She merely stared at him as if he were mad, and clutched the knob of the door she was stand-

ing by. Not for all the world would she go in that room.

"Take a towel," said Falk to Miller, "and put it over his face."

Miller went into the room.

"Come on then," said Falk to the house-keeper, "there's nothing to be afraid of now."

She reluctantly let go of the door knob, and followed him into the bedroom. She did not look towards the side where the bed stood although she fairly tingled with fearful curiosity.

Falk found the keys at once, and handed them to her:

"Now, open the safe."

She obeyed mechanically. Several seconds passed, funereal in their silence. Then the door of the safe sprang open.

"The money's gone," she cried, and began to sob hysterically.

"Are you sure that Saabye didn't put it in his pocket-book?" asked Falk. "Take a look, Miller."

She shook her head vigorously and sobbed:

"I was in here myself making the bed when the master put it in the safe. There was about 4000 kroner."

"There is only about 50 kroner in the pocket-book now," asserted Miller.

"We must search the premises," said Falk firmly. "You go first," he ordered the house-keeper, who still sniffling, hurried out into the corridor.

Miller followed her silently. Falk put out the light.

"It is the burglar alarm from the safe that has been cut," he said to Miller, and pointed to the wire over in the corner of the corridor. "I was blind before or feebleminded."

Mrs. Rosenkvist's two rooms and the kitchen were hurriedly searched. However, nothing of any interest appeared. It was clear that no one but the house-keeper had occupied them.

"Just stay in here," Falk proposed, "and try to be a little more calm. We can expect the police any moment. If your presence is needed, you will be sent for."

The house-keeper looked at him timidly. She was comparatively quiet, however, when they left her.

"This room we haven't searched at all," said Falk as they stepped into the study. "For once, Mister Author, you're on the spot of the crime. Use your eyes—but what is this?"

Falk bent over and picked up a crumpled bit of paper.

"A ten kroner note!" he unfolded it, "and bloody."

"There's something, too," said Miller, and pointed to a couple of half-charred notes that lay before the stove. Evidently they had fallen out of the fire onto the floor.

"If it was Lange who did this," said Falk, "everything seems to indicate that either he was seized by a fear of being discovered or else by horror at his deed. First he threw the bills into the fire, then rushed insanely away. To get away at all cost!"

Falk fell suddenly on his knees:

"A-ah, lift the lamp a little," he commanded. Miller did so immediately. The carpet had a grey-blue ground colour. Consequently the spots that dotted it could be seen quite clearly. Some spots were yet moist. They reached from the wash-stand, which had been converted from a card table, over to the writing desk.

Close by this the spots stopped, but Falk discovered instantly the continuation of them.

"Here we have them again," he showed Miller who, deeply engrossed, followed his investigation. He pointed to a sheet of paper lying on the desk. This too was spotted:

"And the water is bloody," said Falk as he used

his magnifying glass, "and the shelf, too, is wet—and the lip of the vase here."

It was a Japanese vase that stood on top of one of the desk's pigeon holes. Falk, lightning-like, plunged his hand in it, and pulled it out again.

"Here is the instrument of murder," he said triumphantly, and showed Miller a blood bespattered razor. "Since the murderer left it here, it must be Saabye's own razor."

Miller regarded it with something closely approaching horror.

"I wouldn't finger it too much," warned Falk and laid it on the table.

"You needn't be afraid of that!" and Miller made a most comical grimace.

Falk bent over the improvised wash-stand:

"He washed his hands afterwards," he affirmed. "The towel is still quite damp—and bloody."

He ceased his examination abruptly. "That's strange," he muttered, but went on with it almost instantly, "and here is blood on the edge of the wash basin. I wonder where—?"

Falk took the cover off the slop pail. "Hm! I thought as much," he smiled, "he didn't use that."

Falk looked around the room. Over by the window stood a large potted plant. He nodded almost jovially:

"I'll bet anything," said he, "that the earth around that plant is soaking wet, even if it is a fortnight since our lovable house-keeper watered it."

Miller looked at him in astonishment, and stuck his finger in the soil, but drew it quickly out again:

"You're right," he gasped, quite grey in the face.

"Did you burn yourself?" smiled Falk. "But, look here, for God's sake, you're not going to faint?"

Miller wiped his brow. He was, indeed, swaying, but regained self-control and tried to smile:

"You must really excuse me, but I'm a little less used to murder than you are—and when I stuck—"

He stopped abruptly. The front door bell shrilled loudly, again and again.

"That is not the police," said Falk astounded.

Miller and he stood for several seconds staring silently at each other. The ringing became more and more persistent.

"Who in the world—," Falk looked as if he sought in vain to solve a riddle. A riddle whose solution was a point of honour with him. Then he seemed to give it up, and went out in the corridor and opened the door.

Miller heard him utter a cry of amazement. Falk stood as if paralyzed, with his hand on the door knob. Miller, too, stiffened with surprise.

The light was lit in the hall. It was no hallucination they saw before them, and they were both sober. And yet for a moment they doubted their own sight and reason! The person who had rung was no other than Lange, Einar Lange, the artist!

The murderer?

CHAPTER II

LANGE looked at them in utter perplexity. "I don't understand—," he began haltingly.

His eyes were anxious despite their surprised look, and he panted as if from running.

Falk quietly shut the door behind him:

"Let us go inside," he proposed.

"Your friend Mr. Miller persuaded me to come up here with him. My name is Arne Falk. We saw you rush away, and as you seemed so excited—"

Lange nodded nervously:

"It was my sweetheart," he stammered. "Someone called up—said she was fatally ill—I should come out at once—I jumped into my clothes and ran—"

Falk listened attentively, and sat with half-shut eyes.

"And was reassured?" he asked.

Lange shook his head negatively.

"The door was locked," he said, "and the whole

house was dark. Then I hurried back to telephone to ask if she was any better—"

He looked at Falk and Miller as if he expected that they would go. The latter stood with bent head overwhelmed by the painful situation.

"Who called you up?" asked Falk.

Lange regarded him with surprise:

"It was, as I told you before, some one at Captain Stock's who called me up."

"Was it the Captain himself?"

"I don't think so."

"Who then?"

"To tell the truth, I don't know," answered Lange a little impatiently.

"How long have you been calling at their house?"

Falk spoke so politely that Lange could not but answer.

"For the last nine months," said he, "about every day."

"Have you often talked with the members of the family over the telephone?"

"Yes, very often but—"

"And yet you don't know who called you up?"

Lange shook his head impatiently.

"I didn't give it a thought when I received such bad news."

"Have you any objection to my ringing up Captain Stock about it? I'll explain afterwards why I have such a deep interest in this telephoning."

"No, go ahead," Lange's astonishment apparently grew minute by minute. But it was also mixed with anxiety.

"What's their number?" asked Falk.

"Vester 112,562."

Falk rang and gave the number.

"Hurry please!" he told the operator, and waited. Some seconds passed.

"Where is the Captain's telephone placed?" asked Lange.

"In the living-room—but at night they move it into their bedroom."

Falk still sat and waited.

"That's rather strange, as it—well, here we are—hello! Is this Captain Stock's? Is this the Captain himself?"

Falk heard a sleepy voice roar out an oath asking who the devil it was that dared to disturb him, Captain Stock, in his night's rest?

"I am calling from Mr. Lange's."

Falk heard a wordless grunt.

"The Captain or his wife," he said respectfully and with a reserved smile at the other's rudeness, "called him up barely a half hour ago and told

him to hurry over as your daughter lay at the point of death—."

Falk stopped a moment. He was overcome by the storm of indignation that raged over the wire. Was somebody playing jokes on him, Captain Stock! Somebody was crazy, etc.

Falk cut him short:

"You did not ring then?"

"No."

"And your daughter is not sick?"

"No!"

"Is there anything to it at all then?"

"No.

"If I only could get a night's rest. Never have I heard—" Then the Captain slammed up the phone.

Falk hung up and turned towards Lange who, perplexed, had listened to the conversation.

"He denies having called you."

"I don't understand it." Lange shook his head. "But thank God that Ada is well."

"Have you a telephone yourself?" asked Falk.

Lange answered in the negative.

"Did Miss Stock or her parents or any one else at all there in the house, know that you were going to spend the night with your foster-father?"

"No, of course not. I didn't know it myself be-

cause father—yes, I call him father—suggested it himself, the weather being so bad."

"How could any one at Stock's, then, think of ringing you up here?"

"No, that is quite true," said Lange. "I hadn't thought of that. They couldn't."

There was a second's pause. Neither Falk nor Miller stirred. Lange moved in embarrassment.

"Now that you have cleared that up or rather—" He stammered a little. He was bewildered and there was something in the air that made him apprehensive.

"In other words, you are asking us to go," said Falk.

Lange nodded in relief.

"It is late—and I am afraid that we will wake Mr. Saabye."

"You needn't be afraid of that," said Falk drily. "Mr. Saabye will wake no more in this life."

Lange became as pale and stiff as a corpse. He hardly breathed. He stared at Falk. At first with fear, and little by little more calmly. He wet his lips.

"Did I understand you correctly?" he asked.

Falk nodded: "Yes, Mr. Saabye is dead."

Then Lange was overcome. Sobs choked him.

"Dead! Dead!" He actually writhed in his sorrow.

Falk gazed at him, almost awed.

If this was acting, then—

"I am going in to him," shouted Lange suddenly and ran to the door opening on the bedroom corridor.

Falk jumped in front of him.

"You're going to stay here," he ordered.

Lange's eyes blazed:

"Are you mad, man? How dare you stop me, me, his son—!"

"Your foster-father is murdered," said Falk as quietly as he could.

Lange became quiet immediately.

"Murdered! Good God!—who did it? Who did it?"

Again his emotions gripped him. Miller had to help Falk hold him. He would go in to his father. He shrieked and yelled, was like an inconsolable child. Suddenly he collapsed, stupid, powerless.

Falk locked the door to the corridor.

"I have some questions to ask you," he said, and turned to Lange. "If you will answer them?"

Lange nodded dully:

"When was—when did he die?" he asked softly.

"About a quarter to twelve," said Falk. "About

five or ten minutes before you were called up, as you say."

Lange raised his head incredulously.

"That is impossible!" he said.

He wet his dry lips and broke down again.

"Oh, poor father! poor father!"

"When did you go to bed?" asked Falk unmoved by the other's despair.

"A little before eleven," answered Lange. "I happen to know it precisely. I always put my watch, and whatever I have in my pockets, aside before I go to bed, and I happened to look at it then."

"You insist, then, that you laid these things aside this evening also?" asked Falk. "Think a moment."

"I laid them on the table there," explained Lange, who now had become more calm but was terribly pale: "my watch, a cigar-clipper, a pencil and my pocket-knife."

"And you have not been outside the room here, before you—after the mysterious telephone call—ran down the stairs? Not in your foster-father's room?"

"No."

"Do you know this knife?" asked Falk and

handed him the knife he had found in the bedroom corridor.

"Yes, it is mine," admitted Lange.

"How did it get out in the corridor leading to Mr. Saabye's bedroom then?"

Lange shook his head, completely at a loss, and was about to put the folded pen-knife in his pocket. Falk stopped him.

"We'll let the police have that," said he. "By the way, what condition are its blades in?"

Lange looked at him in surprise.

"You can easily find out yourself by opening it," he said.

"Just now, I prefer," smiled Falk, "to learn it from you!"

Lange gave a shrug.

"It has only one blade and there is nothing the matter with that."

"Is it nicked at all?"

"No, not a bit."

Falk showed him the damaged knife.

"I don't understand it," said Lange. "The blade was all right when I put it on the table."

"Perhaps you can explain better," said Falk somewhat sharply, "where this smear of blood on the wash basin comes from, and why the water is

emptied not in the slop pail but on the potted plant there." He pointed to the Pelargonia.

"I don't understand that either," admitted Lange, and the colour rushed to his face:

"But what business is this of yours, anyway? Am I being cross-examined?"

Falk shook his head.

"No, not at all. But you probably soon will be. The police ought to be here soon."

Lange became quiet at once.

"You talk to me," he said to Falk, "as if I were a criminal. It can't be that you are silly enough to believe that I am mixed up in this crime. In a vile crime against an old man! And a man who has done me all the good in his power! Who has been a father to me!"

Falk looked at him calmly without answering.

Miller shrugged his shoulders sorrowfully. With a nervous laugh, Lange took out his handkerchief to dry his damp forehead. All the colour had vanished from his face. "Madness! Madness!" he mumbled.

Hardly had he said it when Falk tore the handkerchief out of his grasp and held it up to the light.

"Look there!"

The three looked.

It was bloody.

"And your coat?" And he drew the wellnigh nerveless Lange over to the light.

His light grey coat was sprinkled with large, dark spots!

Lange stared at them. He saw clearly that it was dried blood. . . . The blood roared in his ears. He felt consciousness slipping away from him. He swayed slightly.

"Take hold of him!" cried Falk to Miller who stood nearest. Miller seized him but instantly let go again, Lange fell to the floor.

"It was the blood," stammered Miller. "The blood on his coat. This will cause me many a sleepless hour. I wish the deuce we had gone to the Figaro instead."

Falk had got Lange over to the sofa, and was bathing his temples with water from the pitcher. Miller looked on silently.

"Is Lange Saabye's heir?" asked Falk suddenly.

"Yes, he is the sole heir. Saabye told me so this very evening as we talked about him. The old man had made no alteration in the will. He was a fine old fellow."

The front door bell rang, a short, quick ring.

"That is the police," said Falk. "Go out and open the door."

Lange began to stir as Inspector Jensen-Skandrup and several detectives stepped in the room accompanied by Miller and a physician, Dr. Pedersen.

Jensen-Skandrup nodded jovially:

"Still on the job," he said and greeted Falk respectfully.

"Where is the body?" asked Dr. Pedersen.

"Stay here a minute," Falk told Preben Miller.

One of the detectives began to search the room.

Falk showed the others into the bedroom. "Phew!" grunted the Inspector as he saw the dead man. "They certainly did a good job. That was made by a sure hand. It didn't tremble much."

He accompanied Falk out into the corridor. The doctor began his examination, and the men from the identification bureau tried to find fingerprints and so on.

"Have you any clues?" he asked Falk.

"Plenty of them," answered the latter, and told the Inspector of Lange's flight from the house, the discovery of the murder, the finding of the bloody ten crown notes, and the blood spots on Lange's coat and handkerchief.

"Could you wish any more evidence?"

"No, that's clear enough," said Jensen-Skan-

drup, "although it was the Devil and not our Lord who invented circumstantial evidence."

Falk nodded smilingly. It was one of his own bon mots which the Inspector absent-mindedly had used.

The door to the study opened. It was Preben Miller. "Lange has come to himself again," he said. "He wishes to talk to the Inspector."

They went in. Lange sat on the sofa looking very bewildered.

"I am Inspector Jensen-Skandrup," said the detective somewhat harshly. "You wish to speak to me?"

Lange nodded.

"I have a question to ask you. Yes, for Mr. Falk has probably told you what has happened?—Do you take me for the murderer?"

Jensen-Skandrup shrugged his shoulders:

"I really haven't formed any opinion of that yet. I must, however, hold you in custody, for it is a fact that you are the only male person outside of the murdered man, who was in the house at the time of the crime. Mr. Falk and his friend searched the place a few moments after you ran away from here with a bloody coat and handkerchief. It's easy to see that the kitchen door has been locked since the house-keeper went to bed.

And the lock on the street door can not be opened with false keys."

Lange, perplexed, sought a way out.

"Couldn't the murderer have secured the keys to the front door?" he asked and suddenly thought of something:

"Mrs. Rosenkvist, the house-keeper, was saying last night that she thought she had lost her keys. Father was a little angry about it, for she is always losing or forgetting something. He showed her a third bunch of keys that always hang in the corridor and gave her permission to use them if she could not find her own. But he told her to take care of them. Mrs. Rosenkvist probably went out yesterday afternoon. Maybe the murderer followed and stole the keys from her!"

"Go in and get the house-keeper," ordered Jensen-Skandrup. The detective who was searching the room went out into the corridor. They heard him knock on the door to Mrs. Rosenkvist's rooms.

"You insist then," and the Inspector turned to Lange, "that you slept right from 11 o'clock when you went to bed, until 12 o'clock when you were awakened?"

Lange nodded: "Yes!"

"You heard no noise of any description from your foster-father's room?"

"No!"

"The murderer must have passed by this room here—both going in and back. You heard nothing of him then?"

Lange again shook his head.

"Neither," continued the Inspector with a more and more insinuating smile, "when he entered the house or when he left it?"

"No, you see, I sleep very heavily," explained Lange.

The Inspector nodded with a sarcastic smile.

"Very heavily," he repeated.

"And yet I think I was half awake at some time or other," Lange recalled without having noticed the Inspector's ironical suspicion.

"Is that so?" Jensen-Skandrup still smiling nodded encouragingly to him.

"Until this minute," explained Lange. "I considered it a dream but it is all too real to have been a dream. No, I was awake or rather half awake when—"

He sat and stared straight in front of him, as if he were calling back the picture of that moment. Jensen-Skandrup gave Falk a meaning look.

"Well, what happened?" he asked Lange with apparent scepticism.

"It all seems to me," Lange strove to remember,

"like a blurred photograph. But there was something, a bright object or a streak of light in the middle of it—and something long and pale like a hand—and then a slight noise of something or other—and constantly a rushing and roaring as of music or of a storm."

"You can't define it more clearly?" asked Falk with marked interest.

"That Mr. Lange can not, I am sure," said Jensen-Skandrup scornfully. He did not believe a word of the painted, fantastic account, as it seemed to him.

"But here is the house-keeper," he said, and turned towards the door that had been opened behind him. "Now we can get matters cleared up about those keys."

The house-keeper, nodding and curtseying, came into the room. She was dressed as if she were going to a festival.

"She absolutely would change her clothes," whispered the detective to Jensen-Skandrup. The house-keeper glanced at the latter in confusion. He began to question her about the keys:

"Do you think it is possible that some one has stolen them from you?"

"No, for I have already found them," explained Mrs. Rosenkvist in a shaky voice.

"Where were they?"

"On the stand out in the corridor leading to my room."

Einar Lange bowed his head despondently—the Inspector smiled in triumph.

"Good," he said to the house-keeper, "you will be notified when to report in court."

Mrs. Rosenkvist made a curtsey, and backed hurriedly out of the room.

"It didn't work, did it?" asked Jensen-Skandrup. Lange jumped to his feet in protest, but managed to control himself.

Dr. Pedersen and the officer from the identification bureau now appeared. Falk drew the physician to one side.

"May I see the death certificate?"

Dr. Pedersen gave it to him. Falk studied it closely. He stopped at the description of the wound:

"The throat cut in an absolutely death-dealing gash from left to right. Wound made by a razor, and followed by almost instantaneous death."

He also noted the doctor's temporary report of the probable moment of death which about coincided with the time the watch had shown.

"It's a sad affair," said Dr. Pedersen.

He might as well have said that the weather was

cold. He had written too many death certificates to be moved by one more.

"No finger prints!" Falk heard Jensen-Skandrup burst out. "I'll be damned!"

The detectives substantiated it:

"Only the dead man's," they said, "and the house-keeper's."

"Let's go then," and Jensen-Skandrup turned towards Lange.

"I'm going to stay here a few minutes," said Falk.

"All right, have a good time! And good night!" The Inspector went out with Lange and the two detectives. The third remained to search the house more thoroughly.

"I'll see Dr. Pedersen on his way," said Miller and gave Falk his hand: "I've had enough of this murder-laden air for the evening."

Falk stood by the window and saw the automobile with Lange and the detectives drive away. Miller and Dr. Pedersen sauntered, chatting, down toward Vesterbro Market. Falk turned away at an exclamation from the detective whom he had heard rattling the coal-scuttle while replenishing the fire.

"What is it?"

The detective took something out of the scuttle

and laid it on the table. A pair of blood stained gloves with the initials E. L.! Falk whistled softly. That was why there had been no finger prints, neither on the safe nor the razor! And that was why the towel had been so bloody. The murderer had—God only knows for what reason —washed and dried his hands with the bloody gloves on. The detective shook his head in bewilderment.

"I never came up against anything like this before," he said, "such a mixture of the professional and the amateur."

Falk offered him a cigar and lit one himself.

"Have you any objection to my spending a few minutes in the bedroom?" Falk asked.

"No, not at all, Mr. Falk. Only don't touch anything in there."

"No fear, I won't!"

The man eagerly continued his search, and Falk opened the door to the bedroom. He turned on the light there, looked around and then put it out again. Then he raised the roller shade. The moon shone into the room, and shed its light over the head of the bed. Falk lifted the cloth that had been laid over the head of the corpse, and examined the wound carefully.

The room had the form of a parallelogram

whose four corners were right angles. The bed stood up against the long wall and directly opposite the door. Its head was towards the window in the short wall on the right, and separated from it by the wash-stand. The safe stood against the wall on the left.

Falk hastily visualized the murder. From the door the murderer had moved softly to the right toward the head of the bed. Over by the window, he must have stopped a moment, probably from fear of waking his victim. For Falk saw that the curtain on the right side of the window had been stepped on and had sagged a little. The noise must have been very slight. But the murderer in spite of that had stopped and waited until the old man's regular breathing had assured him that he slept. After which he had stolen over to the wash stand upon whose glass top the razor had lain. And of which the murderer must have known beforehand.

He had thus obtained the knife, and then had tiptoed over behind the head of the bed. Saabye, who had a slight tendency to asthma, always slept with somewhat low-cut night-shirts. It had been easy for the murderer, then, to see his throat, and to calculate his stroke. Now he had bent over the somewhat low bedstead. And in the same in-

stant that he, with one stroke from left to right, had cut the throat of his victim, he had with his begloved hand choked the cry that he feared Saabye would utter.

Falk seemed to see the death certificate before him:

"The throat cut in an absolutely death-dealing gash from left to right—"

And beside it, a picture of Lange at the instant when Falk had handed him the pocket knife, and he stood with it in his hand. Falk grew pale from excitement— But did he remember correctly? And lastly what did this array of evidence mean that had loomed up against Lange: the flight, the telephoning, his knowledge of the safe combination, the bloody coat and handkerchief, the bloody gloves, etc., etc.!

But still—

Falk covered the face of the dead man and left the room. As he passed the little mahogany stand in the hall, he stopped. Of course, the murderer could have stolen the house-keeper's keys during the afternoon, and could have laid them here after he had killed Saabye. The motive, however, seemed a little obscure.

Falk knocked on Mrs. Rosenkvist's door, who instantly appeared, pale and distracted.

"Do you usually put the keys on the stand there?" he asked.

"Yes, I have often put them there. But mostly here in my bureau drawer or out in the entry."

Falk wished her a friendly good night. There was no information of any value to be obtained here.

As he entered the study, the detective was bent over something on the carpet quite over by the fireplace.

Some cigarette ashes!

"I don't know," and he turned uncertainly to Falk. "if this has any bearing on the case."

Falk recognized the blue-green ashes at once.

"I'm afraid not," he smiled, "the man who dropped those ashes—it is of a very rare cigarette called 'Sunka,' which is frightfully expensive and tastes beastly—has, it is true, killed various persons, but the police can do nothing to him."

The detective looked at Falk in amazement.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because he is a writer, and his name is Preben Miller."

The detective gaped, and still did not understand.

"And," finished Falk, "last but not least because it's in his books that he kills people."

CHAPTER III

THE next day, the anteroom outside the Criminal Court was filled with witnesses in the Saabye murder case.

During the preliminary examination, Einar Lange had denied everything, in a most defiant, most ridiculous manner. The examination had ended with the District Attorney putting him under arrest, and the examination of the witnesses began a few minutes after. Falk and Miller came out of the offices after they had submitted their evidence. It was afternoon but still light. They both went over to the window. The snow slanted down from an unseen sky.

"Stock is here," said Falk quietly. Preben Miller nodded. He'd also seen him.

"I am so sorry for Ada," he said. "She sits there looking like a veritable Snow-Queen. She is so damnably proud. Nobody can guess what she is suffering."

Arne Falk still looked out of the window. Miller took out his watch. "We'd better be going?"

"I'm waiting for Lange, he ought to be here right away."

"What the deuce do you want with him?"

"I want him to substantiate or strengthen an idea that I have."

Miller smiled slightly.

"You are so secretive, you sleuths! But otherwise, I suppose, no one would believe in you."

Falk imitated his smile.

"We must, even as you worthy authors, make ourselves ridiculous to convince the public that we have talent. It's all merely suggestion—"

Miller's smile became a little forced.

Captain Stock sat on one of the benches with his wife and daughter and growled. The mere fact that he had been ordered to appear by a non-militaristic institution peeved him greatly.

And they dared to make him wait in the bargain! Nearly a quarter of an hour passed since the stipulated time! Somebody should just have tried that when he was in the Service! He would get solitary confinement were he a hundred times a District Attorney! But now he had passed the age limit! Was past active service! Oh, hum! Hm! But the Fiend fly away with him, anyway, if he would sit here—!

His growling rose to a roar. His somewhat

brow-beaten spouse blinked at him with red-rimmed eyes. But he would not look. Then she whispered to him:

"Do be quiet, dear Frederick, it will be our turn soon."

The Captain swallowed an oath:

"What times we live in!" he bellowed. "Murder and robbery and unpunctuality! People refuse to go to war! They refuse to become soldiers! But they slit folks's gullets from behind! And then they talk of progress! Progress!"

Mrs. Louise Stock soothed him as best she could, and looked anxiously about. She had heard many terrible tales of how people were treated up here. And her dear Frederick had such a hasty temper. Her frightened, worried glance rested on the benches. How disgustingly dusty they were. Were they never cleaned? Her very fingers itched at the sight, but then she happened to look at her daughter and forgot everything else.

"Poor little Ada," she whispered very low, and pressed her daughter's hand. The Captain also looked over at Ada but looked hurriedly away again, and hemmed and hawed fiercely. Mrs. Stock stared fixedly in front of her. It was so dreadfully sad. Ada had become quite pale and rigid. As if she were frozen in her very inner-

most heart. But then she, her mother, knew how good and loving she was for all her cold exterior, and how deeply she cared for that unfortunate person. She sneaked her handkerchief out. Tears filled her eyes.

"Louise!" the Captain's whisper echoed like a suppressed howl. It made her start. Everybody looked their way, and her husband looked at the innocent handkerchief as if he would burn it up with his eyes.

"Louise! No bawling! Do you hear? An officer's wife does not cry."

She hurriedly put away her handkerchief although her eyes were quite wet.

"But Ada, dear!"

Her daughter had gripped her hand and held it as if she would crush it. But she did not look at her mother. She stared straight at the broad, old-fashioned stairway. Some one was coming down! Mrs. Stock started. She could have sunk through the floor from shame. And yet she liked him so much.

It was Einar Lange, and a policeman.

The Captain had also seen him, and sat stiffly, looking as if he stood hopeless but fearless before a firing squad. Only the beard around his mouth quivered a little.

"There he is," said Falk quietly and left his place by the window.

Lange was very pale but calm. Instead of the blood-stained coat he wore one of somewhat worn black cloth. The police had searched his lodgings immediately after his arrest and they had brought it along. His head was bowed slightly. As he stopped in front of Ada Stock, he held it suddenly erect. Her face was like ice, without expression and full of coldness. She looked through him.

"Ada," he said, in a low voice.

She opened her mouth slightly and then grimly closed it.

"Ada," he repeated and would have said more but gripped at the empty air and was about to fall, weakened as he was from a perplexed and sleepless night and anxious over the suspicious coldness he seemed to read in her face.

"A glass of water," cried the policeman. "The carafe is over there by the window."

Miller poured out some water, but Falk tore the glass from his hand and gave it to Lange. The latter took it with a shaking hand, emptied it and walked, staring stiffly in front of him, into the District Attorney's office. The door closed behind him with a bang.

Miller looked at Falk in amazement:

"Why the deuce did you take the glass—" he began but stopped quickly.

Falk was smiling broadly.

"What in the world are you smiling about?"

"Let us go," said Falk without answering him. They greeted the Captain and his family as they passed. Ada Stock did not recognize them.

"Poor girl," said Falk, and grew suddenly melancholy:

"It is not I who am a genius," he said, "but you others who are so unutterably stupid."

"Beg pardon," Miller stammered.

"Oh, I was only joshing," said Falk and smiled again.

"What was the matter with you before?" and Miller gazed at him thoughtfully.

"I made a discovery," confided Falk, "an exceedingly important discovery."

"And what was it?" asked the other indifferently.

"Of something that you have known for many years," teased Falk.

Miller shook his head and lit a cigarette:

"I am no good at riddles," he said without pressing Falk for any further explanation.

They went silently down the courthouse steps. As they came out on the street, the snow ceased fall-

ing. The street lamps were being lit around them. They turned down the boulevard. A fur-coated gentleman with a black drooping moustache swung his silk hat in a respectful greeting to Preben Miller who barely acknowledged it. Falk looked after the fur clad man in surprise:

"Wasn't that Hempel? Your chief creditor?"

"Yes! There ought to be a law against vermin of his sort greeting one on the street," Miller growled.

"He was deucedly polite! Did he cash that last note?"

"Yes, thank the Lord!" Miller sighed in relief.

"Whose name did you put on the back of it this time?" smiled Falk. "Luckily I won't do."

Miller took him jovially by the arm.

"What a world we live in, when Arne Falk's name is not good enough for the back of a false note."

They walked in silence for some minutes. The light and bustle around them refreshed them. They were both men of the metropolis.

"What do you think of the case, anyway?" asked Miller suddenly.

"To be quite honest with you, for once, I haven't the slightest idea where it is leading to."

"But the discovery you made?"

"—only led me away from one clue without pointing to another—"

Up in the courthouse District Attorney Jörgensen struggled with Einar Lange. The small, fiery official was really angry:

"I consider you too intelligent a man to persist in this ridiculous system of denial. But let me tell you, you shall have time enough to figure things out if we prolong your custody indefinitely."

Einar Lange merely shrugged his shoulders. He hardly heard him. He constantly saw Ada's stony face before him.

"You still deny then," persisted the prosecutor, "that you paid the deceased this visit for the sole purpose of borrowing money from him."

"Yes, absolutely."

The District Attorney made a hopeless gesture.

"What are your plans in regard to your marriage with Miss Stock? You see I can have no regard for your feelings in a case like this."

"We had intended to be married in the course of a few months," said Lange.

Jörgensen smiled triumphantly.

"You make quite a little on your pictures then? The taste for them is well—a bit—hm!—original—"

"I've done fairly well this last year," said Lange. "But my parents—"

The District Attorney interrupted him.

"Thanks, I didn't ask you about that—but what do you call doing fairly well," he continued.

"Oh, a couple of thousand kroner a year."

Jörgensen stretched out his hand to one of the clerks.

"Income tax returns," he ordered and got them. "You were taxed for twenty-one hundred kroner last year. Did you make more or less this year?"

"Almost the same, maybe a couple of hundred more."

The prosecuter placed the blanks carefully together:

"Miss Stock," said he, "is the daughter of a rich man. It was expected then that your father-in-law-to-be would help you out with a yearly sum?"

"No, I won't accept charity, no matter how kindly it is offered."

"Which it probably wasn't?"

Lange shrugged his shoulders.

"There's been no talk of anything of that nature between Captain Stock and myself."

"And you really have no intention of proposing such an arrangement?"

"No, no more than I have of receiving anything whatsoever from him."

"You're not in sympathy with Mr. Stock, then?"

"No, we have different ideas about everything under the sun. I told Ada, my fiancée, already a week ago—our engagement was not officially announced then,—that I would take over both the wedding expenses and the trousseau, and she agreed with me. However, I don't see—"

The other interrupted him.

"That's all right. But maybe you can understand that it's impossible, hopelessly impossible, for you to marry a lady like Miss Stock on an average income of 2000 kroner a year."

"That is something that concerns only Miss Stock and myself," Lange flared up.

"No, not at all," sneered Jörgensen and turned to the court officer. "Bring the house-keeper, Mrs. Rosenkvist, in here."

Mrs. Rosenkvist was almost ready to faint with fright as she stood before the bar. She did not like the atmosphere of the room. It smelled too much of crime.

"You know this gentleman here?" asked the District Attorney and pointed to Lange.

Mrs. Rosenkvist stammered a half-choked:

"Yes, to my sorrow."

"Do you maintain your assertion that he visited the deceased last evening in order to borrow money from him?"

The house-keeper nodded uneasily and glanced at Lange who, half surprised, half angry, exclaimed:

"But what in the world—"

The prosecutor interrupted him:

"Be so kind as to answer only when you are spoken to."

With that he turned to the house-keeper:

"Mr. Lange considers your testimony a downright lie," he said to urge the cowed lady to a more spirited declaration, and it did not fail. At first the house-keeper was staggered by the bare audacity of the statement, but she soon found her tongue. Like a top she whirled around to Lange, her face flaming with indignant anger.

"Mr. Lange has perhaps quite forgotten that I stood in Mr. Saabye's bedroom while he and my poor master were over by the safe— Or maybe you have forgotten what you said to the master then?"

Lange smiled wanly:

"I have forgotten neither—I asked father—as

a joke, of course—to teach me the combination of the safe so that if he should show himself stingy, I could help myself to the contents."

"There was some talk of money then?" concluded the District Attorney.

"Yes, there was," admitted Lange, "but without any designs on my part whatsoever."

"Did the deceased then show you the combination?"

"Yes."

"Did you learn it by heart?"

"Yes."

The other looked at him in surprise; he had expected a denial.

"Did you see that there was money in the safe? Or did you know about it beforehand?"

"I saw my father put it away, besides he had told me earlier that he had been unable to get to the bank with it on account of the bad weather, and that there was about 4000 kroner."

The house-keeper stirred uneasily.

"Is there something you would like to say?" Jörgensen asked her.

"Yes, about a remark that Mr. Lange made as the money was put in the safe."

Lange shook his head a bit irritably.

"I said," he cut short the house-keeper's willing information, "that I ought to learn the combination. So much more so as I might have use for the money that very night."

"Which was not without reason," continued the District Attorney, "partly because you needed it, either for your wedding or otherwise! And partly because your foster-father rarely had so large a sum on hand."

"It was all in joking, of course," answered Lange.

Jörgensen smiled scornfully.

"Of course—" Lange began.

"You will be told when we wish further information," and he turned to the house-keeper who, curtseying deeply, left the room.

"You have some debts," he continued his examination of Lange.

"Only very little."

"No pressing obligations?"

"No."

The prosecutor smiled maliciously, and showed Lange a letter:

"What do you call this?"

Lange grew white and red by turns but did not answer.

"If you care to listen," said Jörgensen with ironical politeness, and began to read the letter:

Mr. Einar Lange,

As I hear that you are about to become engaged to Miss Ada Stock, I suggest in all friendship that we settle a little affair that still exists between us. In which you owe me 1000 kroner. This, I think, you will not deny. However, I will not wait any longer for the money. I will give you a week to get it in. If I have not received it by that time, I shall be forced to go to your future father-in-law, the rich Captain Stock. I hope, however, that this will not be necessary. He is said to be somewhat prudish, and would surely disapprove of that letter of a year ago in which you made me an offer of marriage—and also of the fact that you have loaned money to a girl like me—however, you will have no trouble getting the money, I am sure. In a week's time then.

Respectfully,
ELLY HANSEN.

"The week was up yesterday," continued the District Attorney coldly. "Is it clear to you what would happen if this Elly Hansen went to your fiancée's father?"

Einar Lange nodded stupidly.

"And it has always been clear to you?"

"Yes."

"You forgot about this very pressing obligation before."

"I didn't mention it because this letter is nothing but a downright attempt at blackmail."

"You deny, then, owing this Elly Hansen 2000 kroner?"

"Yes of course."

"Perhaps you don't know this lady at all?"

"Unfortunately, yes. I was at one time so youthfully in love with her that I did offer to marry her. But, thank the Lord, she jilted me."

"Bring Elly Hansen in here," ordered the prosecutor.

"And show the accused into the next room."

The court officer hurriedly thrust Lange in the side room to which the official had pointed.

Elly Hansen stepped in before the bar clad in an elegant grey fur cloak. She exhaled an odour of fleur d'amour. She smiled winningly at the District Attorney.

"This was the letter," he said, "do you acknowledge it as your own?"

"Yes, I certainly do. Are you in doubt?"

"It smells strongly of blackmail, my dear Elly Hansen."

She laughed scornfully.

"It is just as much blackmail as if you wrote to some one who owed you money, if you were in need of it."

The District Attorney nodded sceptically;

"How did Mr. Lange come to owe you so much money?"

"Oh, I can't say for sure. For travelling and café expenses. First class hotels are costly in the long run, and I never drank anything but champagne."

"Have you any proof of the debt?"

"Proof and proof!" Elly Hansen shrugged her shoulders. "I have always had confidence in the men I have known. A gentleman does not cheat a poor woman—"

"—who can loan a 1000 kroner," continued the prosecutor ironically.

"It was indeed all my savings," she insisted undaunted.

"Has the accused had any reason to believe that you would make good your threat and go to Captain Stock if he did not pay you the money?"

"Yes, Einar Lange knows me well. He knows I have plenty of backbone. I don't threaten. I do."

"That's all," said the District Attorney in dismissal. "Thank you."

She left the room like a condescending queen.

"Open the window!" snarled the District Attor-

ney. "She has poisoned the air with her damn perfume!"

The winter air quickly filled the room.

"Captain Stock and wife," was the attorney's next order.

The court officer opened the door for them an instant after. The Captain was a reddish blue from indignation over having waited so long. He gave Jörgensen a furious look:

"I was told to be here at two-thirty—" he began to roar when he was stopped by the prosecutor's short:

"You are Captain Stock, are you not?"

"Yes," he boomed.

"And this lady is your wife?"

"Yes."

"I will not inconvenience you long, Captain. We have sent for you and your wife in order to clear up, if possible, this matter of the mysterious telephoning that Mr. Lange insists has taken place— Do you lock the door to your bedroom at night?"

Captain Stock cleared his throat embarrassedly.

"Yes, you see my wife is easily frightened. She has not as I—have—been—"

"Did you lock it last night?"

The Captain grunted in peevish assent. He was angry at the interruption.

"Are you sure?" continued the District Attorney undisturbed, "that there was no one in there or that no one could have gotten in while you and your wife slept, who could have sent this mysterious message?"

The Captain cleared his throat again:

"Yes, quite sure," he mumbled. "As an old soldier I realize the importance of keeping my post. And these are unquiet times, so—"

"We always search the room before we go to bed," interjected Mrs. Stock anxiously. "And my husband sleeps very lightly. He would have awakened at once if anybody had come in the room. Particularly as there is only one and the same door to the—"

"And as I," continued the Captain interrupting her, "following my wife's wishes, placed various articles against the door which would have been crushed if the door (which opens inwardly) had been opened from the outside."

"You believe then that it was impossible that anybody could have rung up from your house?"

"Yes, absolutely."

The District Attorney got up and said politely:

"Thank you for your information. You will not be bothered again."

The Captain, with a gracious nod, bustled out of the room, followed by his wife.

"Miss Ada Stock," called the District Attorney.

The court officer opened the door of the anteroom and repeated the call. She came at once. He shut the door behind her.

"Offer the lady a chair," he ordered.

She nodded gratefully and sank into it. She was pale as a corpse, but not a muscle moved in her face.

Jörgensen's voice was friendly and sympathetic as he asked;

"Hasn't your fiancé a hasty temper?"

She nodded, trying in vain to speak.

"Pardon me if I ask," said the prosecutor, "but is your approaching marriage his or your plan?"

"It is his," she stammered: "I advised against it; I am young and can easily wait. But he wouldn't hear of it."

"Didn't his pecuniary circumstances make you reflect on such a hasty marriage?"

"Yes, and I spoke to him about it. But he said that we could manage very well without help from anybody."

"Not even from his foster-father?"

"No, not from him either."

"Do you believe in your lover's innocence?"

She looked slowly up at him.

"I hope for it," she whispered. "But if he is guilty he has done it in a fit of insanity. He's hasty tempered and also a little thoughtless. But otherwise he is the best man in the world."

Jörgensen saw that she was about to cry.

"Thanks, that's all," he said.

He heard her sob as the door to the anteroom closed behind her. The District Attorney knit his brows.

"Why do the best women always love the worst men?" he muttered slowly, and then suddenly hit the desk a blow with his fist.

"Bring Einar Lange in here!"

The door to the side room opened. Lange's eyes were moist. He had heard Ada Stock defend him. He had wept.

"Rag!" sneered Jörgensen without looking at him, "well, have you wisely reconsidered things in the meantime?"

"If you by 'wisely reconsidering' mean a confession," said Lange quietly, "I have not reconsidered."

"You are only wasting time by your obstinacy,"

said the attorney in a not unfriendly tone. "Let us try to come to an understanding.

"You are quite poor and have a comparatively small income. In spite of this you intend to marry the daughter of a wealthy man from whom you cannot expect, or, in accordance with your own words, cannot think of help. You know that your fiancée as the only daughter and child of the aforesaid wealthy man is somewhat spoiled. You know also that a change in your pecuniary status is highly problematical. And although you are neither heartless, insane or known as an impostor, you, who I have heard really love your fiancée, will nevertheless drag her down to your poverty and the bitter struggle for existence. I refuse to believe in such conduct towards a person one is fond of. And I find it still more to be condemned. I believe you to have committed this crime—with the understandable, if not justifiable motive of securing enough money to insure your future wife a carefree existence. But perhaps you will still insist that the thought never struck you, that you would become rich at your foster-father's death."

"No, not in connection with the plans for my marriage."

"Not in connection with the letter from Elly Hansen either? As you well knew—from your foster-father's antipathy to this lady—that he would not help you about it."

"No, not that time either. I did not think that she would do anything about it. I regarded the letter of so little consequence, that I threw it into the waste-basket at once where your people no doubt found it."

The District Attorney, with a shrug, resumed quietly:

"After a quarrel with your foster-father of a year's standing, you visit him one evening. You have some days before received a—let us call it a threatening letter, which menaces that connection that you consider essential to your life's success.

"After a year's separation between people who are fond of each other, the confidence between them usually grows much greater. I will therefore quite overlook your statement that you did not speak to Mr. Saabye about your letter from Elly Hansen. I consider likewise your affirmed disregard of the danger it represents, to be false. You have talked to your father about the letter, and asked him to help you out with 1000 kroner. Yes, and I also venture to state that you un-

dertook to make this visit of reconciliation with the understandable and human motive of getting your foster-father to help you out of the delicate situation which the lady had caused. You have a hasty temperament. Your late father had also a hasty temper. An old wound has been opened up, and all this has happened after the house-keeper has gone to bed, and directly before you and your father retired. As the house-keeper's bedroom is out by the kitchen, she has heard nothing of the bickering.

"But you realize that you have gone too far, and see clearly that you will not get the money for Elly Hansen, and that the new breach will at any rate temporarily make it difficult for you to ask your father for any kind of financial assistance.

"I will skip the intermediate happenings and only emphasize the fact that you are the only male person in the house when your foster-father was murdered. You know the combination of the safe. You know that there is money in it. You know where the murder instrument, the razor, is kept.

"The door cannot be opened by a stranger, and all the keys have been proved to have been in the house. The telephone call has been shown to be false. Your terror-stricken flight, however, is a fact, to which is joined the nicked knife with which

you cut the burglar alarm wire. Your bloody coat and handkerchief, your bloody gloves and—"

Jörgensen stopped a moment and laid some money down in front of Lange—"these bloody notes which were found in your coat pocket."

Lange shook his head in pained bewilderment.

"It is all like an evil dream," said he, "but you forget or rather overlook a somewhat essential thing."

"What?"

"You constantly emphasize that I am not insane, but who but an insane person would have committed this murder in such an unheard of and idiotic manner? Besides it would be ridiculous for me to steal the money which would be mine anyway after my father's death. As the sole heir to quite a large fortune, it would have also have been quite easy for me to have borrowed a thousand kroner for Elly Hansen—even the day after."

"If I am forgetful," Jörgensen resumed, "you are no less so. You are not the first example of the logical criminal who has built up the whole deed so very carefully and who in the instant when he stands face to face with his crime forgets all and everything through very horror and only flees."

"I'm no criminal!" insisted Lange hotly, "neither logical nor illogical."

"You still deny everything in spite of all evidence; in spite of evident guilt?"

"Yes, I deny having any knowledge or participation in this murder."

"Thanks, that'll do," sneered the District Attorney, and winked at the recorder as if to say, "Hurry it up a little."

The record was read for the accused in furious haste. He corrected it in various details. The prosecutor sat and glared at him, half surprised, half angry. He had never seen the like of such impudence, and in an amateur.

"Out with him!" He motioned to the prison guard.

The man opened the door for Lange. The window in his anteroom was open. The fresh, frosty air streamed into the close and empty place with its flickering night lights. The noises of the street came up to them; the measured music of a detachment of soldiers.

The sweeping tones of the "Internationale."

Einar Lange stopped suddenly on the threshold, and stood motionless and listened. His eyes were closed. They all looked at him in surprise. He turned quickly on his heel, and went into the court room again quite over to the bar. The District Attorney was putting on his overcoat.

"What the Devil is the matter with you?"

"I have some information to give," said Einar Lange, "which I ask be affixed to the register. I have already told you about my supposed dream last night. Now I know that I also heard music, and the piece that was played was the 'Internationale,' and without doubt on a piano."

The testimony was entered on the record.

"I don't believe a word of it," uttered Jörgensen, "but I will be no less zealous about having it looked into— The next time we meet, I hope, for your own sake, that you have changed your tactics."

Einar Lange was brought back into custody. When he was alone in his cell, he went completely to pieces, and wept like a child.

Even Ada Stock's defence of him had been full of doubt as to his innocence. They all condemned him beforehand. Both people and the law!

And he wasn't a murderer. He wasn't!

Or had he in a fit of insanity—?

He shuddered from cold and horror. He was bewildered. He could do nothing; but merely sat with his dying destiny between his shaking hands, and was unable to breathe warmth or life into its soul.

CHAPTER IV

ARNE FALK turned down Helgolands Street. It was about eight o'clock. The snow fell again. He glanced up towards the corner where the Stocks lived. All the windows were dark except one where the light burned low, as if in a sick room. He had heard that Ada Stock had suddenly become ill after the court examination. He felt so sorry for her. He knew this outwardly cold type of woman who could go around with an aching heart and a conventional smile on her lips.

She also considered Lange to be the murderer just as the law and the whole city did. The evidence was too overwhelming, and people had had less cause for killing a man than Einar Lange had had; he who would have gained a fortune and a bride, and warded off an overhanging danger by his crime. The motive had been very clear. The unusual clumsiness about the execution of the deed must simply be put down to the fact that Lange had after the murder become horror-stricken at his deed.

It was all as clear as sunlight. One only wondered at such a hopeless denial. Falk had a slightly different opinion. It seemed quite obvious to him that the case was far more difficult than appeared upon the surface, but if he doubted Einar Lange's guilt, yes, even his participation in the murder—then it was because his experience led him at once to the band who in the spring and summer had committed so many trackless robberies, and who had eluded the police so successfully.

Their gain had happened to be comparatively small, but it could not be denied that their operations had been conducted in a manner so traceless that it pointed to the direction of a high criminal intelligence.

What if this band was in back of the whole crime? Falk easily perceived how fantastic his hypothesis was, but if Lange was innocent, which he was almost inclined to think, then this band's criminal cleverness was the only one that Falk could consider on a par with the mystery of the crime.

Some one greeted him and stopped. It was Inspector Jensen-Skandrup.

"Good evening!" he shook hands cordially.

"How goes it?"

"Tonight he is to be confronted with the body," said the Inspector. "That'll make him talk all right. We put something of the dramatic into it, you see. Most all of them fall for it. Besides, he's admitted that he knew the will was unchanged in spite of the bad feeling between him and Saabye. His foster-father had told him that himself, so he shows there what he did when he—well. But you haven't heard the latest. You remember his fairy-tale about a dream with a hand and a light and some noise. To tell the truth, I don't believe a word of it. But I'll be damned if it hasn't turned out to be an actual fact. Some of it at any rate."

Falk smiled:

"So you believe in that too?"

"Yes, I pretty nearly have to. We have gone into the matter, and it has been shown, first, that the moonlight at the time the murder was committed really did shine through an opening in the curtain, and fell on the writing desk as he said. But the noise could be at least satisfactorily explained by the razor being put in the vase on the writing desk shelf. And the hand could have been his own—eh—eh?"

"Did you also clear up that rushing and roaring he spoke about?" asked Falk.

"Yes, barely an hour ago; it sounded a bit fishy but now it is as clear as brandy."

"And what was it then?"

"Music."

"What music?"

"Well, he suddenly thought of it this afternoon. It was this here—what—d'you call it—'Internationale.' "

"And you have substantiated that he had or could have heard it?"

"Yes, that's just what we have. There is only one little peculiarity about it?"

"And what's that?" asked Falk.

"We inquired about," explained the Inspector, "both in No. 10, 12, 14 and the house on the back and side, and there is really one of the musical ladies or gents there, but still only one—who plays the 'Internationale.' She lives, by the way, in No. 10, the house next door."

"And that one?"

"Insists that she played the tune at a quarter to twelve, at which time she closed the piano and went to bed."

"That is, a full half hour before Saabye was murdered—and before the murder instrument could have been put in the vase."

"Yes, just! The lady has a mantel-piece clock that was wound up three days ago and is absolutely correct.

"Well," Jensen-Skandrup continued, "I don't know what you think. But I think that the whole story is just something that the fellow has cooked up to bewilder us. And it is clearly nothing but thoughtlessness that made him drag this music into it—I don't believe that the money is burned either. He found some place all right on his way to Stock's where he could hide it. Burning several thousand kroner! There is a limit, by God, to how idiotic a person can be." The Inspector was quite indignant at the thought.

"I am of the same opinion as you," nodded Falk. "The money was not destroyed."

Jensen-Skandrup swelled like a pouter pigeon. Falk had through various experiences become his very ideal of a detective.

"We two, eh?" he grinned. "We can solve anything. If we have time enough."

"Apropos, time!" Falk stopped abruptly but continued again:

"There is always somebody at the house?"

"Yes, of course."

Falk nodded genially.

"Well, I must be going."

Jensen-Skandrup raised his hat absent-mindedly, and looked after him for a long time:

"He has something or other up his sleeve," he mumbled half regretfully, half wonderingly. "Another wild goose chase! He's full of surprises, that fellow. Heaven only knows what he meant by 'apropos, time'!"

The Inspector drifted grumblingly into a restaurant and ordered his dinner—and ruminated about Falk—.

The latter had already turned down Isted Street which he followed almost to the corner of Saxo Street. A couple of houses from it he stopped and went into a plain, unpretentious rooming-house. He had got the idea after the court examination that perhaps Elly Hansen could put him on the track of something, or rather she was the only point of suspicion in so far as she could have been the cause of the crime. If Lange, that is, had had something to do with it.

She lived on the second floor in a three-room flat. The door knob was brightly polished. Falk rang and waited. No one came. He repeated his ring but still nobody came. He was about to give up for the time being, when he heard some one

below carefully open the street door, and creep quietly up the stairs. There was something so very cautious about the footsteps that he became suspicious. A man was only so careful when he did not wish to meet any of the people of the house.

Falk leaned over the banister. The cautious one was a small humpbacked man. He was nearly at the first landing now. By the light of the dull gas jet, Falk could see his face, and recognized it at once. The cobbler from Saxo Street. He had been very quiet during this past year but the year before he had been very well known to the police. It was said that he'd got religion. Just now, however, something beside pure Christianity shone out of his unshaven face. It was undeniably a bit sinister.

Falk went up to the next landing. A passing street car luckily drowned his steps so that the other could not hear them. Falk silently blessed it. The cobbler stopped on the second landing, and knocked softly on Elly Hansen's door. What in the deuce was he doing down there? When no one came to the door he rang. Four short rings. A certain pre-arranged signal? But still no one came.

Falk heard him mutter several blistering oaths. What under the sun did the cobbler want of Elly Hansen? One of her cavaliers he certainly was not! She had—or at any rate had had—a well cultivated taste for comfort and a filled pocketbook, and was not hindered by that romantic, protective idea which made so many of the city's fly-by-nights dependent on a lover of their own status in society.

Falk was silent as the grave. The cobbler rang once more. Then the street door opened, and he heard some one come up the stairs humming cheerfully, pass the first landing and go on. He looked down cautiously. It was Elly Hansen. He saw her stop on the landing, and regard the cobbler with an almost hostile look:

"What do you want here?" he heard her burst out. "Didn't I tell you once and for all not to be following me around?"

The humpbacked gnome bowed in artificial humbleness.

"I know you are mad with me, Elly," he admitted. "But I am, after all, your own brother, and I must speak with you."

"About what?" Her tone was still cold but she talked in the same low voice as her brother.

"It's so hard for father and me to get along," he whined. "We don't know which way to turn, and we have hardly a bite to eat."

"Well, what's that got to do with me?"

"I thought maybe that you—"

"Didn't I make it clear last time? I'm not going to help you any more. I've other uses for my money."

"I'll have to talk to Nielsen then," and her brother straightened himself suddenly. His glittering black eyes gleamed evilly.

"I don't know where he is," said Elly frostily and turned to open the door.

The cobbler placed himself in the way.

"You'd better find out pretty quick," he snarled threateningly. "Or else—"

"Or else—else—" she said scornfully.

"We must use other means!"

"You bum!" She glared at him. "Do you think Nielsen is afraid of you? Of you?"

"I can make him afraid," her brother smiled wickedly.

She pushed him to one side.

"All right, all right! Beat it."

"Then we may hope that very soon—"

"Yes, I'll tell him to look you up but I haven't

seen him since yesterday afternoon. Good-bye."

She slammed the door in his face. The cobbler looked at it with a malicious smile.

"I'll get the best of you yet, old girl," he whispered hoarsely and spat. "You slut!"

He went noisily down the stairs. Falk followed him. The cobbler's close relationship to Elly Hansen opened up unthought-of possibilities. A crook who played religious was capable of anything. Such was Falk's belief anyway.

"What if the cobbler—!"

He dismissed the thought hurriedly.

In that case, he would not have been in such dire straits as was evidenced from his begging from his sister. It was quite another thing, though, if he had some connection or other with the real criminal.

Just at present, the grounds for suspicion were rather weak. Any one of the city's thousands of crooks could just as well be implicated in the murder as he. But Falk followed him anyway.

The cobbler turned down Saxo Street, and disappeared in his cellar. Falk waited until he saw a light lit in the room back of the shop. Then he knocked and went in without waiting for an answer.

The cobbler popped up in the doorway at that instant like some dwarf of the underworld.

"Who is it?" he asked harshly.

Falk stepped into the belt of light that was thrown by the lamp on the table.

"It is I," he said. "Good evening. It is quite a while since we have had one of our little chats."

The cobbler stood as if rooted to the threshold and barred the way to the back room.

"This is an honour, Mr. Falk," he purred, "but my poor father is sick. It rests in God's hand, His almighty hand, whether he will ever arise from his bed of pain."

"Is he as stewed as all that?" smiled Falk and pushed the cobbler merrily but firmly aside, and went into the back room. A grunting sound came from the darkness where the cobbler's bed stood.

Falk lit a cigar.

"So your old man is still hitting the booze?"

The cobbler despondently shrugged his shoulders.

"I try to hide it from the eyes of the world. God forgive me!" He folded his hands. "His flesh is still sinful, but the Lord Christ will save him."

"Don't you think a temperance cure would be better?"

"I believe in the Lord," chanted the cobbler. "He who knows all has both refuge and salvation for a worthy old man." He bent down over his father.

"Shouldn't we rather say a worthy old scoundrel?" said Falk coolly. "But you have become converted?"

"I have sought the Lord Jesus and I have found him," brayed the cobbler.

"But does it bring in any cash?" Falk still smiled.

"A man whom His Majesty—" grunted the old man from his corner "—whom His Majesty shook hands with—"

"Has your father had an audience lately?" asked Falk.

The cobbler did not seem to understand:

"Father is a little childish," he said with a syrupy smile.

"He is!" exclaimed Falk, inwardly wondering at a childishness that had led its possessor from one prison to another.

"You see His Majesty—God save him—was once on a visit through the coops—the prisons!—

and met father and shook his hand—and he can't—"

"How touching," said Falk. "What prison was it?"

"Ah, humanity is but weak. But the Lord God is a merciful judge," exclaimed the cobbler piously.

"Last night you weren't so holy. Things weren't running so very smoothly then."

The cobbler bowed his head in remorse.

"The spirit is willing," he said, "but the flesh is weak."

"What were you doing out on Osterbro so late? It was eleven thirty."

The cobbler looked up in surprise.

"I wasn't on Osterbro last night. I haven't set foot there in the last two weeks."

"Oh, yes, it was you," insisted Falk, "but maybe it was a little later than eleven thirty."

"You were mistaken," protested the other. "The old man and I sat at Nikolajsen's from nine until closing time at twelve o'clock. That was mostly for father's sake," he added with sham concern. "I don't go there very much myself but one has some responsibility, and he is helpless when he has had too much."

"Does he live with you?"

"No, he has a room in the attic that goes with the basement here, but he often rests down here. For he is old and weak. Ah, the world is, indeed, sinful."

"What does he live by?" asked Falk.

The cobbler tried with no success to appear unconcerned.

"Oh, the 'Army' helps him a little, and then he helps me in the shop now and then. But that doesn't amount to much. Still the Lord, the Almighty—"

Falk interrupted him quietly.

"Look here, I always respect the instinct of self-preservation no matter how filthily it may be masquerading. Whether it's in crime or religion. But I also wish to have my intelligence respected or my instinct. Whatever you wish to call it. And it tells me: First, that this nauseating cloak of religion is a sham. Secondly, that you are in the game again. Your protests are superfluous. I know very well that your lungs can't stand it. But the law can't either, and one of these days you'll get it, but until then I'll give you a chance. There is a case that I'm interested in. Can you guess which?"

The cobbler did not try to play stupid.

"The murder case last night," he said sullenly. His piousness had utterly slipped from him.

Falk nodded:

"I hope and do not believe that you yourself had anything to do with it. But perhaps you have heard something or other. You move just as I do—in certain circles. And they are a little more open to you. In other words, there is some money to be made."

The cobbler reflected a moment. His voice dropped as he said oilily:

"I'll do the best I can. Of course, it's a dirty —."

He stopped suddenly and listened. A cautious knock was heard outside of the shop. The cobbler opened the door to the kitchen and smiled crookedly.

"If you will be so kind as to step this way?"

"Do you expect ladies?"

The cobbler smiled again. "I am but a man, thank the Lord." He still stood with his hand on the knob of the open door. A gust of cold, clammy air filled the room.

"I hate back stairways," said Falk. "I'll close my eyes as the ladies go by."

The cobbler closed the kitchen door. For a moment he was clearly nonplussed, but as the

knocking continued, he turned sullenly, and hurried out in the shop.

Falk heard him open the door and exclaim with disappointment:

"Is it only you, Nielsen? I thought it was Jensine."

Falk went out in the shop. As he did so he saw the man whom the cobbler called Nielsen throw the cigarette butt he was smoking up on the street and tramp into the shop, rubbing his benumbed fingers.

He started as he saw Falk, but merely greeted him with a sullen pull at his slouch hat, and lounged into the back room while the cobbler, bowing humbly, ushered Falk out and locked the door behind him.

The light from the street lamp fell on the snowy, icy sidewalk. A cigarette butt lay there, the one Nielsen had thrown away. It had such a unique look that Falk bent over and picked it up, looked at it in surprise and put it in his pocket.

"I'll be hanged," he murmured thoughtfully and cut across the street to Nikolajsen's Café and went in.

The little, smoky place with the sanded floor, the beer advertisements on the walls, and the red-

checked tablecloths was nearly empty. Some of the neighbourhood's "messieurs des femmes" were playing pool in the next room. They were in their pink striped shirt sleeves, and wrist watches gleamed golden on their fat, pale wrists. Nikolajsen watched the game with interest until he noticed Falk. The latter ordered whiskey.

"Well, well, good evening, Mr. Falk." He rolled over to his distinguished visitor smiling his welcome. "To what do I owe this honour? A bit of a chase, eh?"

Falk shrugged.

"Life is nothing but a chase, Nikolajsen."

Nikolajsen laughed in assent: "So 'tis, by Gawd! So 'tis!"

"I also took a little run over to the cobbler's," Falk told him. "He comes here quite often, doesn't he?"

"Yes, he gives me all his trade."

"He had a nice jag last night, eh?"

"A little bird must have told you that. But it was mostly the old man. I could hardly get him out although it was after twelve. He can't carry a load like he used to."

The host shrugged his shoulders in compassionate disdain.

"No, it's not given to all of us to last as long as you, Nikolajsen. You've got it down to a science."

"B' Gawd, so I have," boasted the host. "But I'm no spring chicken any more."

"And they started in the middle of the afternoon?" continued Falk visibly impressed.

"The cobbler and his old man," protested Nikolajsen, "didn't get here until nine thirty but then they did get busy."

"Then they actually sat here for two hours and tipped the bottle?"

"Yes, you can bet your boots they did. They crooked their elbows all right. But we made an evening of it too. And the cobbler soon forgot his religion."

Falk lifted the shade and looked out.

"Are you afraid of the snow?" and motioned to the waiter.

"Two shots here, Severinsen."

"Yes, I hate a snowstorm," nodded Falk.

From the window where he sat, he had when he lifted the shade a very good view of the cobbler's cellar. Quite often while enjoying his second drink, he peeped out from behind it. But he was not afraid of the snowstorm. He was waiting for Nielsen, the printer.

CHAPTER V

WHEN the cobbler had locked the door behind Falk, he went sullenly into the back room where Nielsen waited for him, smoking a fresh cigarette.

His dirty fingers seemed to caress it as he took it from his mouth, to remark with a sarcastic smile:

"Well, you've had a visit. A visit by law and order."

The cobbler fidgeted.

Suddenly the other's smile became icy and his voice cold and cutting as he said:

"Look out, don't burn yourself!"

The cobbler protested:

"I'd no idea he was coming." His sullenness had changed to humble and eager explanation. There was something so strange about this Nielsen. One felt insignificant beside him. It was as if he could read all your thoughts.

"You didn't!" said Nielsen scornfully.

"No, I tell you. And I was expecting you any minute. So if I had been going to get the bulls, I would have had him come at some other time."

"But it's a dog's life," he added, "and maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea to have a surer way of making a living."

Nielsen smiled poisonously.

"Yes, maybe! Elly tells me that you're dissatisfied with me."

The cobbler looked away:

"It's only that it's so devilish hard to get along," he muttered, "and the four or five jobs we've pulled off together didn't get us much."

"No, because you're so thick and didn't use your head. When a fellow is out on a job and there's 2000 kroner in a bureau drawer, it's the usual thing to open the drawer and nail the money — The last time you were drunk and nearly spoiled everything. I've no use for drunks. I'd sooner lay low. I have kept my promise. You're the one who's broken the contract."

The cobbler looked up in sudden resolution.

"That makes no difference," he said. "We have worked together and you must help me now or we'll starve to death."

"You have your religion," mocked Nielsen, "and your stool pigeons. You'll get more pity too if you're not too fat. No one will starve to death in this country if he's sufficiently pious."

The cobbler stared at him. His voice rose to

a growl as he said: "If you won't help us, I'll go elsewhere."

"Where, may I ask?" Nielsen was visibly amused.

"To the gentleman you saw a little while ago," threatened the cobbler, egged on by the other's scorn. "He's a man who'll pay big for some good dope."

Nielsen calmly knocked the ashes off his cigarette.

"I make no threats, Hansen. But if you ever do say anything concerning me to this man, I advise you to look around for a grave at once. For God strike me dead, if I don't kill you."

Nielsen had got up from his seat and his eyes blazed so behind his glasses that the cobbler began to shake.

"I didn't mean just that," he mumbled, and offered the printer his hand. "You and I are pals."

Nielsen seated himself again. He was pale with excitement and did not seem to notice the cobbler's outstretched hand.

"You forget, too," he continued more calmly, "that you have a couple of years to your credit—and your lungs. Even at the best, you too would have to rot in jail."

The cobbler nodded humbly:

"I know it, Nielsen. I know it. It was only that I was so upset—"

"I'll give you a ten-spot," said the other shortly and began to search through an old worn wallet. He handed the cobbler a crumpled bill. "I can't spare any more."

The cobbler looked at it disappointedly but did not dare to ask for more. His father turned over and grunted. But the son did not notice, only stared at the bill, then suddenly took his eyes from it and put the note in his pocket.

Nielsen had not noticed his face. He sorted some of the papers in the wallet. Then he closed it, put it in his pocket and stood up:

"Good night," he said and was about to go.

The cobbler fawningly shook his hand.

Suddenly he asked: "Have you cut yourself?"

Nielsen looked at him in surprise:

"Cut myself?"

"Yes, or had a nosebleed?"

"Are you fooling?" sneered the other. "What in hell makes you think I've cut myself or had a nosebleed?"

"Let's see your hands?" leered the cobbler.

Nielsen held them out in the lamplight, ostentatiously willing.

"Don't you want to see my belly too? Or my legs?

"What in hell's name is the matter with you?"

Nielsen drew his hands away as if he had burnt them.

"Why do you ask if I have cut myself?"

"Because there is blood on the bill," grinned the cobbler.

"Nonsense!" Nielsen grew quite pale.

"Nonsense," he repeated, "let's see it."

"So that you'd swipe it from me," the other smiled craftily. "No, we won't play that way."

The printer shrugged his shoulders but said nothing. His eyes did not leave the cobbler's ill-shaven face for one instant.

"You saw Elly last night, didn't you?" remarked the other quietly.

"How do you know that?"

"Elly told me herself."

"Maybe she lied."

"And why should she lie?" the cobbler's smile broadened.

"I don't know," said Nielsen evasively. "Women often lie for the sake of lying."

"Yes, and men," nodded the cobbler, "usually have weightier reasons than that."

He filled his pipe, lit it, and calmly seated him-

self on the edge of the bed as if it was a matter of course that they would continue their conversation.

"You were at Elly's last night then?"

"What business is it of yours?"

"And between eleven and twelve?" grinned the cobbler unabashed, and went on quickly without waiting for an answer:

"Did you read about the murder last night? A lot of money is said to have disappeared."

Nielsen pulled his hat over his eyes.

"I must be going," he said.

"If there is blood on any of it," continued the cobbler, "the fellow that took it had better watch out."

Nielsen smiled wickedly.

"What is the meaning of all this nonsense? Is it your honoured belief that the money I gave you is from the mysterious safe?"

The cobbler had suddenly become silent.

"Or that it is me that killed him?" continued Nielsen. "If I had I would be better off than I am now. Come, what do you say?"

"I didn't mean anything," grunted the cobbler.

Nielsen nodded curtly.

"And the better it is for you," he said and went out in the shop. "Stick to your religion. That hurts nobody,—And remember what I said before:

No tricks! Or I'll cure you of the talking habit for life."

The cobbler opened the door for him. When the other was half way up the steps, he whispered:

"Wash your fingers better! There's blood under your nails!" and quickly slammed the door.

Nielsen stretched out his hand in the lamplight and gazed at it. He heard a mocking laugh from the cellar. He shook himself, put his hands in his pockets, and lounged down towards Isted Street.

Just then a man came out of Nikolajsen's Café. The street was white and deserted. It was therefore more than difficult for him to follow the printer without his knowing it. The man waited until the printer had turned the corner of Isted Street, then he hurried after him.

It was Arne Falk. He stopped at the corner and saw Nielsen stop outside of Elly Hansen's house and look up at her lighted window—then open the street door and lock it behind him.

On the other side of the street, Falk discovered a book-seller's window that interested him deeply, and none the less because from there he had a fine view of the place where Elly Hansen lived. Her windows were the only ones in the whole house that were lit up. Then he saw the printer's

shadow slip past the window shade's yellow surface, with an apparently excited gesture.

What the deuce was happening up there? Now the light went out. In the frosty air of the quiet street, sounds travelled quickly. Falk heard the door up there open and hurriedly shut again, and the foot-steps of some one coming down the stairs. Steps that he seemed to know! He slipped over to the street door which was suddenly opened by—Preben Miller!

He recognized Falk at once.

"Good evening. What are you sniffing around for?"

"I'm getting some fresh air," laughed Falk, "and you?"

"I've just visited a mutual acquaintance of ours —Miss Elly Hansen."

"But the idyll was interrupted?" smiled Falk.

"Beg pardon?" Miller looked at him in surprise.

"Isn't the lady engaged to a printer called Nielsen?"

Miller slipped and dropped his stick:

"By Satan, but it's icy here!—How the deuce do you know him?"

"I was, you might say, introduced to him last fall down at the cobbler's."

"The cobbler's?"

"Yes, one of those Saxo Street birds."

"I haven't had the honour," complained Miller smilingly.

"Nielsen, however, I have met several times. He's not just what you might call attractive."

"He's jealous, perhaps."

"It looks as if he is." Miller lit a cigarette.

"May I have it a moment?" asked Falk.

Miller gave it to him in surprise. Falk began to compare it with the cigarette stub that Nielsen had thrown away:

"They are both Sunkas," he said and showed them to Miller. They stood under a street light.

"Where did you find that butt?" asked the writer.

"Nielsen threw it away as he went in the cobbler's place." Miller whistled softly.

"Now I understand why I always miss cigarettes when I visit Elly. She simply grabs them for him. I'll just put a stop to that! They cost too damn much to be wasted on a bum like him."

They had gone some yards from the house. Falk stopped:

"I'm going the other way," he said, "good night."

"Good night." Miller sauntered down the street.

Falk stood still and lit a cigar. Then he loitered over to the other side of the street. A sign over the door advertised the fact that there was a pay telephone within. By looking in the directory he found that Elly Hansen had a telephone, and from the telephone booth nearest the door he had a fine view of her house directly across the way. He asked for her number. "Hurry, please," he added. Several seconds passed. Then a light was lit in the house across the street, and he saw Elly Hansen—as a fleeting shadow on the shade—pass the window on the way to the telephone.

"Hello," Falk made his voice sound rough.

A clicking hello came from the other end of the wire.

"Is this Miss Elly Hansen?"

"Yes," The voice was more reserved now.

"Is Nielsen there?"

Falk heard something like a smothered scream. She must have been frightened at something or other. Her voice shook, too, as, in response to his repeated question about Nielsen, she countered with a question as to whom she was speaking.

"This is one of his friends, Printer Petersen."

"There must be a mistake somewhere. I don't know any one named Nielsen."

Falk heard her slam down the receiver. He

looked out. The light still burned in her room. He waited about half a minute and then again gave her number.

"Line's busy," Central answered.

Falk gasped. She had then instantly called somebody up! Unless the remarkable coincidence had happened that she herself—just at this instant—and so late at night—had been called up. This latter theory he was disinclined to believe.

Some moments passed. Falk tried again to get her number. But Central still reported "busy." She was certainly having a long conversation. Or perhaps she was constantly ringing a number up trying to get connections.

"And why?"

Falk was not in doubt about that. It was his questioning about Nielsen that had frightened her. His standing probably wasn't in the best order either. His friends were bad, and his "trade" was no doubt worse. He was probably both a crook and an "Alfons" which did not coincide with the description that Falk had received in the city of Elly Hansen, who never burdened herself with that kind of connection. On the other hand, Miller's description of him was not to be mistaken. Only Falk had never before in his practice

encountered Nielsen. But there had to be a first time both for him and the printer. Maybe the police knew of him!

Falk rang up headquarters. The officer on duty answered, and he gave him Nielsen's description right from the slouch hat to the yellow front teeth and the eye glasses.

"Look and see if you have him up there," said Falk, "and ring me up at my home in a couple of hours—no, I won't be home until then."

The officer promised he would. Falk hung up. Now he saw the light go out in Elly Hansen's window, and was about to leave his post when he suddenly had an idea and again took up the receiver. This time he gave a new number and quickly got an answer:

A sleepy voice boomed: "Hello, who is it?"

"This is Falk," said he: "Just now I am in a house in Isted Street on the odd number side. Its a pay station and next to the corner of Saxo Street. Hurry down here, Holm. I need you for a piece of well paid night work."

"In ten minutes," promised the other, "I'll be there!"

Falk stood in the doorway and waited. It was still dark in Elly Hansen's flat. Heaven only knows why she had denied all knowledge of Niel-

sen? He had an instinctive feeling that he was at the beginning of the solution of the riddle. And yet he saw clearly the utter fantasy of connecting the printer, about whom he knew nothing, with this murder. But still—

Now and then a policeman passed the door where Falk stood. Occasionally a roistering company staggered through the quiet street filling the frosty air with giggles and squeals.

Then Falk heard hurrying footsteps approach and stop outside the door, a short undersized man came in, lifting a bowler hat. It was Holm for whom Falk had telephoned.

"Watch that house over there until tomorrow morning. I will send you a relief then. If the person I am interested in should leave the house, follow him and telephone me where he has gone." And Falk described Nielsen.

"Don't know him," said Holm. "But he shan't get away. I know this section through and through."

Falk gave him some cigars.

"They make the hours go faster. It's cold out and you'll have to walk up and down all night. I'd stay over on the other side of the street, too. Good night!"

The man disappeared. Shortly after Falk

stepped out and hurried over to and down Saxo Street. It was pitch-dark in the cobbler's cellar as he passed it. The street was deserted.

Falk turned down Vesterbro Street. It was bitterly cold. He stopped outside of No. 12 and looked up at Saabye's windows. Pitch-dark! He took out some keys and opened the street door.

He turned on the light and hurried up the stairs. The door of the murdered man's apartment was unlocked. Things were being made as easy as possible for the "eventual" murderer, if he was some one other than the arrested Einar Lange. For criminals are often said to be attracted to the scene of their crime.

Falk smiled. Now and then he was a little mischievous. He looked at the unlocked door without opening it and waited until the light below snapped out. He waited still a few seconds and then carefully took hold of the door knob, turned it, and stepped stealthily into the dark corridor.

At the same instant the light from a police flashlight hit him in the face. He cried out a merry "Caught!" and turned on the electric light. The policeman, who faced him and whose duty it was, to guard the flat, grumbled disappointedly but then smiled almost instantly.

"So it wasn't the murderer this time! Well, I guess he's up behind the bars all right."

"The murderer would never have lit the hall light," Falk instructed him. "The real murderer, that is!"

The officer closed the door and they both went into Saabye's study.

"I'm going right away," said Falk. "I just wanted to see what time it is—by the dead man's watch."

The officer placed the watch before him. Falk examined it; an old gold watch with an open face. It was sixteen minutes of twelve. He turned it over and took out his pocket microscope. It was only the work of a few seconds.

"Now, I'm sure of my point," he said and handed the man the watch. "I'll just use your telephone a second."

Falk asked for the police headquarters, and got the officer on duty:

"Did you have this Nielsen?" he asked.

The answer was in the negative.

"We know nothing at all about him."

Falk hung up.

"If I were you," he said to the officer. "I'd lie down and take a nap. "There'll be no murderer here tonight."

The policeman looked at him in surprise.

"How do you know that?"

"From the watch there," smiled Falk. "But I'm going home to sleep, good night."

. . . . . .

When the officer was alone, he curiously picked up the watch and examined it. It was the case that Falk had been most interested in. The man looked at it for a long time but finally put it irritably aside:

"There is a little dent in the middle of the case. That's all I can see, and, Lord, but this is tiresome."

The official hand of the law yawned so that his very jaws creaked, and sat down to wait for the coming of the murderer, whom he might expect if Lange was not guilty. But he was firmly convinced that Lange was.

CHAPTER VI

THE cobbler came out from Nikolajsen's Café. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. He had been in to get a couple of bracers. They warmed one up.

Since the affair of the ten kroner bill the night before his brain had been in constant activity. And the result of his cogitations had been gain, no matter which way he turned it! Whether he squeezed Nielsen whom he never could stand, and who must have had his finger in the Saabye murder—or whether he told Falk all, and made money on this, and got Nielsen, that cheeky scoundrel, in trouble and made things hot for Elly for whom he had a deep-rooted hatred. Stuck-up and mean Elly had always been towards him—her own blood brother!

Well, things were in great shape now!

The whiskey had in the meantime, turned him to the tenderer feelings, or maybe it was the fear of the prison, the prison that his lungs could not tolerate; it was true his conscience was not absolutely snow white. And then too the police,—that

bunch of farmers—they were so brutal, even with a pious man.

No, the best way to settle the matter was by amicable adjustment. Although the Lord knew that he wished for a chance to get back at his sister and her sweetheart.

"Go easy, Thorvald Hansen," he impressed on himself time after time. "That pays best, too. And, who knows, maybe, there will be a chance to pay back—but all in good time."

Well satisfied, he turned the corner of Isted Street and saw a fashionably clad gentleman disappear into the house where Elly lived. He waited a bit and stole after him.

"The devil!" He stood irresolute a moment. Then he suddenly saw a whole new opportunity in the stranger's visit. Just to get rid of him, her brother, she would give him money. Nielsen's turn would come, too, later on. And he would make her open the door too. He would simply use the danger signal. He would begin by asking for Nielsen and then start his game.

Yes, that was the way to do it. Now that he had something on Nielsen, he would be high and mighty if they dared treat him as they had before.

He crept up the stairs, and listened outside the door for a few seconds. Nielsen was in there. He

heard his voice as she opened and shut the door for him. Of the stranger he heard nothing. Had Elly got him out of the way? Nielsen was so terribly jealous.

The cobbler's heart pounded. Nielsen was a hard nut to crack. But it was as easy to jump into it as to creep. He rang. Then he gave the danger signal. Four short rings. That worked. Some one stirred. Elly opened the door clad in a Japanese kimono, and smoking a cigarette. She drew him in hurriedly.

"What is it?" she asked in an anxious voice.

"I must speak with Nielsen," said her brother.

"Nielsen isn't here," she answered and stood in his way as he tried to get in the room.

"I have company," she explained.

He was perplexed for a moment. Why did she deny that Nielsen was there. He himself had heard him speak a few seconds ago.

"Tell me where I can get in touch with him then," he insisted. "I've something very important to tell him."

The cobbler did not seem to be aware that he had forsaken his original plan. He only clung to this one; to talk with Nielsen. He barely understood his own tactics. Perhaps he merely followed them because he saw that they seemed to em-

barrass Elly. And why did she not tell him to be more quiet although he spoke very loudly?

Suddenly he heard Nielsen's voice from within.

"Let him come in. I'll be there in a couple of minutes." And he heard the door to the bedroom open and shut.

Elly showed him into the living room.

"You mustn't talk so loud," she whispered. "The stranger is in there. He is one of Nielsen's acquaintances—of his prosperous days," she added as she saw her brother's incredulous look.

The cobbler sat down. The twilight deepened in the little room where the air was heavy with cigarette smoke. A leaping and blazing fire burned in the stove. The cobbler sighed in involuntary contentment, but then thought of the coming tilt with Nielsen—and of the peculiar stranger.

In the room here he had been cautioned to whisper out of consideration for Nielsen. "Acquaintance—from his days of prosperity—hm!" But out in the corridor he had been able to shout and yell as much as he liked without his sister even trying to get him to talk in a lower tone! Who could the stranger be?

There was something so secretive about all this.

Besides he was—the cobbler—sailing under a false flag. Nielsen would certainly rave when he heard this proposition. What could Nielsen be doing? He asked his sister about it in a whisper. She stood by the door to the bedroom as if to make sure that he didn't go in.

"It's the stranger," she said. "He's seeing him off."

Shortly afterwards they heard some one go out in the kitchen and open the door, and then they heard Nielsen's voice:

"Good-bye. See you tonight then."

Then steps down the stairs, and the slamming of the front door.

The cobbler stood up. His knees shook. Just then Nielsen appeared in the doorway. He had on his dirty suit of clothes as usual, but on his feet an elegant pair of shoes. Thorvald Hansen noticed these at once and connected them immediately with the bloody ten kroner note, with Saabye, and with a sudden prosperity, with a "job" from which he—in spite of golden promises—had been excluded.

There came to him at this moment sufficient bitterness for the attack.

Nielsen's eyes gleamed like knives behind his glasses:

"What do you want?" he asked and remained standing by the bedroom door.

"It's something very important. I must talk with you—alone."

Nielsen looked at him a moment, and opened the door to the bedroom.

"Go in there then," he said to Elly who obeyed at once.

The cobbler saw how untidy it was in there. The door of the clothes closet was wide open, and a heap of clothes had been thrown into it pell mell. Elly shut the closet door at once but left the door to the living room ajar. Nielsen did not notice it, and the cobbler said nothing. If Nielsen proved refractory Elly could hear it all, and then she would be sure to advise him to give in.

"It's about this matter of the bill yesterday evening," began Hansen. "I've been thinking it over." Nielsen nodded in ironical comprehension.

"And now you have come to the holy conclusion that it is your duty as a citizen and a religiously moved soul to take the police in on your discovery."

"Yes," nodded the cobbler unsuspectingly. "Of course, I wouldn't say that it was you I got it from. Just as if you in reward for all your kindness—"

He stopped suddenly. There was something about the other's look that made him shudder despite the fact that he merely looked at him and smiled.

"You still think, then," and Nielsen cut right through his masked threat, "that I had something to do with that dirty affair?"

"Of course, I don't think it," said the cobbler in a low voice. "If I thought that I would never go to the police with that bill. But I'm a poor man, I have hardly enough to put in my mouth."

"The police won't give you a red cent for your crazy ideas."

"No, but Falk!"

There was a pause.

The cobbler's eyes did not leave the other's face. He had noticed how Nielsen started when Falk's name was mentioned. Now he was figuring out something or other. But the cobbler stuck to his post.

"Have you the bill?" asked Nielsen suddenly.

The cobbler smiled warily.

"Yes, but hidden in a sure place with a few lines attached to it explaining how I got it. In case, you see, anything should happen to me."

"It is quite clear to you, I suppose," said Nielsen slowly, "that it will be very unpleasant for me

to get mixed up in this affair so much more because it will harm a friend who once did me a favour. Whether he has anything to do with the murder, I haven't the slightest idea. But this I do know, that though I'm nearly broke, I would offer you a few kroner rather than risk— What will you sell it for?"

"Did your 'friend' present you with those shoes then?" the cobbler interrupted. "They must have cost a lot."

"He loaned me the money for them if you wish to know," Nielsen warded off impatiently:

"How much do you want for the note then? Shall we say 15 kroner?"

"They got away with 4000 up at Saabye's," said the cobbler calmly. "I will sell the bill for half."

Nielsen raised his eyebrows.

"I don't feel like joking. How much will you sell it for?"

"It's no joke. I want 2000 for it."

Nielsen took him by the arm:

"No more play acting," he sneered:

"You can get 20—or go to hell!"

The cobbler tore himself away, and backed towards the bedroom door:

"Twenty kroner! You'll have to beat that. You

can blow a little more on a guy who did a rich man in. Especially when he is one's dear friend! Or near relative. For is it possible that it could be your father's son: Nielsen the printer? Eh?"

"You shall have 40 kroner," promised Nielsen. He was very pale and could hardly control himself.

The cobbler laughed scornfully.

"Forty kroner! I want 2000! Get me? That's cheap enough to duck a life sentence. And when you give me the money, I am not only your friend but your accomplice."

The bedroom door opened slowly and there stood Elly, very pale and trembling. She stared at Nielsen.

"What is it he is saying about you? What is it? Tell me, please. You are no murderer, no? You are no murderer?"

Nielsen calmed her:

"No, of course! It is only your honourable brother, drunk as usual."

The cobbler grunted, scornfully superior.

"But the bill he is talking about?" asked Elly quickly.

"That's one he got somewhere in town, I don't know where."

"Lies! Lies!" mocked the cobbler.

Nielsen turned on him with lightning swiftness.

"If you don't shut up, I'll—"

"Murder me, too, heh?" grinned the other evilly. "Take care of your hands this time, and wash them carefully so that there's no blood under your finger nails."

Nielsen swayed, white with passion:

"He's lying! It's a lie!"

Elly stepped over to her brother.

"When was he killed, this one you're talking about?"

"The night before last between half past eleven and twelve," he triumphed.

Elly started but controlled herself and said:

"Nielsen was here a little before nine and all night."

"You didn't remember right then yesterday afternoon," grinned the cobbler. "Then you told me that you hadn't seen Nielsen since the day before yesterday."

"No, I remembered right enough but it wasn't any of your business where he was."

The printer had become somewhat calmer.

But his hand trembled as he lit a cigarette:

"Now, you think that over until tonight," he said to the cobbler. "I am going out to Enghavevej to a meeting. At 12 o'clock, I'll be at the corner of

Vesterbro Street. Then you can get 40 kroner for the bill, unless, of course you prefer to tell tales out of school about it. And now, get out!"

The cobbler did not move from the spot.

"Didn't you hear me?" growled Nielsen.

"Yes, but I'm waiting for you to come to your senses."

Nielsen reflected an instant, seemingly weighing it pro and con.

"You'll get 40 tonight," he said, "and 60 in the course of the month."

The cobbler shook his head.

"Going up, I see—40 and 60 make 100. But half of 4000 is 2000."

"Get out of here," snarled the printer.

"I'm going when I feel like it," said the cobbler with a superior air,—"besides they'll get you soon enough—"

Nielsen turned on him like a sudden thunderstorm:

"You damned hound!!"

His fingers closed viselike about the cobbler's neck. The latter was about to choke when Nielsen threw him to the floor, pounding his head on it.

"You hound! You hound!" he snarled and kept his hold on the other's neck.

There was a rattling in the cobbler's throat.

The blood swam before his eyes, and sparks leaped before them. With a last despairing effort, he tore himself away, and bit at the other's hand but failed to reach it.

Nielsen did not notice it. He stood and wiped his sweaty forehead. There was an expression of deep disgust on his face.

Elly had put her arms around his neck. She caressed him as one would caress a wronged child. Her eyes became black with disgust and rage as they rested on the cobbler.

"You beast," she sneered, "and such a cur is one's own brother!"

The cobbler was at the door in one leap, tore it open and ran out into the hall.

"I'll get even with you for this!" he cried, quite beside himself, and slammed the door and shambled down the stairs.

The slam of the door seemed to wake Nielsen.

"I must change my things," he said and gripped the knob of the bedroom door. "This calls for quick action."

"You did it then?" Elly whispered hoarsely.

He nodded.

"You are the murderer then?" It was as if she froze as she said it.

He nodded again.

She suddenly threw her arms around his neck and kissed him hungrily.

"I love you," she moaned. "Nothing in the world shall come between us—murderer!"

He tore himself violently away and pressed his handkerchief to his lips. She had bit him. A thin stream of blood ran down his chin.

She stood devouring him with her eyes. Her nostrils quivered. Her breast heaved. Her eyes shone behind her tears. She had an animal-like beauty in that moment. And he saw it, but still he turned away with a frown and said:

"Haven't I once and for all told you to cut out that kind of nonsense. It is that kind of foolishness that—"

The telephone rang.

They stood very still and stared at it as if it was a door about to open for some horror; a mouth that was about to utter a message of misfortune.

The fire crackled loudly in the stove. A roar came up from the street as a trolley car passed. Some one came up the stairs, and let himself in somewhere. A door slammed behind him. Several seconds of silence went by.

The telephone rang again. More loudly. Demanding an answer.

"Answer it," he said to her, "but let me hear who is speaking before you ring off. One can never know—"

She picked up the receiver. Her hand shook. It could be an absolutely commonplace call but both were convinced that it was the contrary.

"Hello," she said.

"Is this Miss Elly Hansen's?" some one asked. She seemed to know the voice. "I should like to speak with Nielsen."

She gave him the receiver hurriedly. The question was repeated.

"Say he is out travelling and won't be back until tomorrow morning," whispered Nielsen to her and gave her the receiver.

The person thanked her for the information. She hung up.

"It was he who called me up last night," she said nervously.

Nielsen frowned.

"What the devil could he want me for?" he mumbled to himself.

"Did you know his voice?" she asked frightened at his expression.

"Yes, it was Arne Falk."

CHAPTER VII

FALK sat with the receiver to his ear. He was talking with Holm, one of the detectives who had watched Elly Hansen's house during the night.

"And you are sure that this Nielsen has not left the house?"

"Yes, absolutely sure!"

"And the man who relieved you?"

"He's with me now in the pay station right across from the house. He relieved me about 9 o'clock this morning. He hasn't seen the printer either."

"Keep on watching," ordered Falk, "and follow the instructions I have given you."

He hung up and turned to his secretary, former chief clerk Johannes Willing, who, stiff as a ramrod, and conservative as an old family servant in a novel, was typing the thesis for a doctor's degree on which Falk had been working for the past year—a work on criminology and medicine.

"Put that rot aside," Falk shocked the middle-aged gentleman by proposing. "What does

Goethe say, that old aristocrat, about theory and practice. When one has a red-hot case to play with, a doctor's thesis is dead and of no account. That is to say, comparatively. Besides, no one escapes his fate in this country. If you will hand the faculty a nice, thick book, you become a doctor. It doesn't matter much what's in the book."

Willing nodded without clearly understanding. He always nodded when Falk began his paradoxes. It was no use to argue with crazy people. What was the use?

Willing waited expectantly. Since the famous *Borck* murder affair, he had almost lived in a fools' paradise with Falk, for the latter's time had wholly been taken up by research work, and the like. But now it was all over.

Why couldn't people stop killing each other—and especially in such a cunning way that even the police found it impossible to discover who the murderer was? He sighed discreetly.

Falk began to sum up the case:

"A murder is committed, the motive apparently as clear as day. A young man, hitherto unbesmirched, is suspected of it, and arrested. An ex-convict has what is in his circle a great rarity, namely a friend who as yet has not graced the rogues' gallery. Last night I saw this friend—

Nielsen the printer—go up to a girl's flat. A girl who stands in a certain relation to the murder although not a criminal one. With the aid of my own and my two agents' eyes, I substantiated that the man was and still is today in the flat with the fair accomplice—do you follow me, Willing?"

The secretary nodded with hypocritical interest. He knew that Falk appreciated a good listener.

"But now a remarkable thing occurred," continued Falk. "Nielsen the night before last had gone up to the girl, Elly Hansen. Barely half an hour after I ring her up, and ask her if I can find Nielsen there.

"The lady becomes frightened, denies any knowledge of the printer—who, according to Miller, is her daily visitor, and hastily rings off. As I see that the light in the room where the telephone is, is not extinguished I ring her up again a half minute later, and Central tells me the line is busy.

"Wherefrom I conclude that immediately after my telephoning, she has called some other number and told the person of my query and asked him or her for advice. But whom has she called up who has her confidence to such degree that she can ask his advice in such a delicate matter as that of Nielsen's—who?

"Well, it's no use falling into a trance about

this riddle. Let's rather move forward to the next one. About a quarter of an hour ago I telephone the girl again. This time she doesn't deny knowing the man, but tries to pull the wool over my eyes by saying he is travelling, which is absolutely impossible. The eyes of my agents are sharp enough.

"She has probably been instructed to say that," ventured Willing.

"Yes, by Nielsen himself," nodded Falk. "You see, he must remain inside the house. I, too, have my special reasons for wanting him to remain there for the present."

The front door bell rang.

"It is Preben Miller," said Falk.

And it really was the author. Falk heard his taxi drive away below.

"We are discussing your unholy flame, Miss Elly Hansen. Yes, and her printer—does she love him, do you think?"

"Yes, in her way," shrugged Miller, "more's the pity."

"But still she is deceiving him about you?"

"Yes, luckily."

Willing moved in an embarrassed way.

"Perhaps I—"

"Oh, go ahead," smiled Falk.

"Was he scandalized?" asked Miller as the secretary disappeared.

"Can you, a psychologist, ask such a question?" laughed Falk. "Well, she loves the two of you then?"

"Yes, and I support both her and my rival. It's expensive but interesting."

"Did you see her today?"

"Yes, I took a little run up there. But Nielsen was there too, so I preferred to withdraw."

"Perhaps you have just come from there then?"

"Yes, just about. A taxi went by as I came out on Vesterbro Street, and I hailed it and drove up here."

"About what time was it when you left there?"

"I can tell you almost to the minute," said Miller and looked at his watch. "It is eight minutes to four now. It was precisely three fifteen—for the court house clock struck the quarter hour when I left the house."

"Did you notice anything peculiar about your rival today?"

"No, only he was like an irritated terrier, as he always is when he has the honour of seeing me. And it did not put him in any better humour when I told him sweetly to keep his dirty fingers away from my cigarettes. Of course, he swore by half

a dozen various places that he had never touched my 'stinking hay.' I don't know what he means by calling my Sunka cigarettes 'stinking hay.'"

"Well, unfortunately I also have the same plebeian opinion," smiled Falk. "You didn't come to blows?"

"No, he crawled in his shell again and even opened the door for me when I went out. Tout comme il faut!"

"Did he say he was going away? Or tell Miss Elly anything about it?"

"No. But that means nothing. Even if he were going to the very ends of the earth, he would try to keep it from me as long as he could. The dear fellow is so jealous!—But I can telephone her and ask. That will be the best way—."

"Apropos telephoning," said Falk stopping him on his way to the telephone. "Didn't somebody call her up while you were there?"

Miller shook his head in denial.

"No, that's so too," remembered Falk. "It was later I called up."

Miller stood with his hand on the receiver and was about to pick it up when the front door bell tinkled. He drew his hand away.

"Some one is ringing."

"Shh!" whispered Falk.

They both listened.

"What a pull he has," said Falk shortly after, "and humble! As nauseating as a milk toddy."

The house-keeper knocked on the door and opened:

"There's a man who wants to speak with you."

"Who is it?"

"He said just to say 'the cobbler': that you would know who it was."

"Show him in."

The house-keeper went out.

"It's your brother-in-law," said Falk jocosely.

"What!"

"Yes, Elly Hansen's brother. A fearful bandit. I don't know whether you care to be presented to him."

"No, God save me! I'll go in the living room in the meantime." Miller hurried in and quietly closed the door behind him.

The cobbler was ushered in by Mrs. Jörgensen who was not visibly impressed by him. At any rate the closing of the door amounted to a slam.

The cobbler literally oozed hypocrisy. He bowed humbly.

"What do you want?" asked Falk ungraciously.

"I only want to ask you something."

"And what?"

"How a poor fellow, who has a trifle on his conscience and a few years on his record, would stand —if he can put the police on the track of a real criminal. One of that crowd who murder people, and steal thousands of kroner besides."

"You'll have to ask the police about that," said Falk shortly.

"I thought," sighed the cobbler with feigned despondency as he looked around the room and lowered his eyes, "that your word, Mr. Falk, had some weight with them, and that you were not afraid to help a poor devil. That is to say if it's a case that interests you."

"There is only one case that I am interested in just now," said Falk, "and I hardly think you know anything about that."

Falk did not doubt for an instant that he did. But he had his own methods in a case like this. A certain scepticism and indifference always egged the other on to open disclosures. Nor were these withheld here.

"Now, maybe I may have heard something or other about that case," ventured the cobbler. "That is, the Saabye murder, now don't you think —I mean, it's hard when one wants to be an honest man, to have this for a start!"

"If you can tell me some facts about the case, I'll see what I can do for you," promised Falk.

"You misunderstand me a little," said the cobbler humbly. "It's not me, but a friend whom this concerns. And I don't think he'll agree to those conditions. There is too much to lose and too little to win."

"In other words, he demands protection?"

"Yes, and some money. Otherwise the poor fellow will die of hunger."

"And what will he give in return?"

"He'll tell who murdered the old man, and stole all the money."

Arne Falk started violently.

"But the money was burned," he ventured.

"The devil they—that is, I guess, I guess so," added the cobbler hastily.

"I can offer your 'friend' 50 kroner," said Falk and took out his wallet, "and protection."

The shoemaker writhed humbly.

"It's impossible for less than 100 kroner. He owes a frightful lot of money."

"All right, I'll give you 100," said Falk after some delay and handed him the money. "Who is the murderer then?"

The cobbler took out the crumpled, blood-stained note of the night before and showed it to Falk.

"It is the man who gave me this," he whispered, and looked up warily. He had heard some one stir in the next room.

"He gave me this last night. And today he promised me 40 kroner, and turned white as chalk when I talked about the murder."

"Who is he?" asked Falk.

"His name is Nielsen, and he is a printer out of work.

"He's the one you saw at my place last night. He's my sister's sweetheart, and she admitted to me herself that he was not with her at the time the murder was committed. But today, she denied having said it."

"Why did he give you money?" asked Falk.

"Why, that's some he owed me," lied the cobbler brazenly. He hated unnecessary unveiling.

"But this note is really no proof," protested Falk.

"Yes, it is, together with something else, if you'll allow me," answered the other and described the events which had taken place in his sister's flat.

"Then, it's best to get hold of him at once," resolved Falk. "He is at your sister's all the time, isn't he?"

The cobbler was about to say yes when he sud-

denly remembered Nielsen's offer about the rest of the money he was to get that evening. What if he could kill two birds with one stone, and keep the police away from Nielsen until he had the 100 kroner.

"No, he's not there just now," and he shook his head, "and won't be there today either."

"He is travelling, perhaps?"

"Yes, he's travelling. I don't know where, but he'll be back tomorrow morning."

"When were you up there, and saw him last?"

"About ten minutes after three. I noticed the time on the clock across the street."

This fitted exactly with Miller's statement of having been at the street door at a quarter after three. At least the cobbler had the time at his finger tips!

"Did you meet any one up there?" asked Falk.

"No one but the printer and Elly. But there was a stranger there whom Nielsen showed out while I sat and waited."

"Oh, you saw him then?"

"No, because he went down the kitchen stairs."

"Why in the world did he leave that way?"

The cobbler shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know."

"When did Nielsen go away then?"

"I saw him leave the house a few minutes after I had gone. It must have been about half past three then."

Falk took some notes now and then. He was utterly at sea regarding this trip of Nielsen's. Nielsen could not have slipped out without his agent knowing of it. There must have been a mistake somewhere.

"Are you absolutely certain that it was Nielsen?"

"Yes, of course! I know him as well as I know myself."

As a cautious move, Falk had had the telephone moved to his bedroom.

"Pardon me a moment," he said to the cobbler who regarded him with barely concealed suspicion.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid I'll follow in your footsteps."

Falk disappeared into the bedroom. The cobbler sat perfectly quiet, with his ears strained like a tightly stretched drum. His glance darted around the room seeking to discover a possible danger that might be concealed somewhere.

A few minutes after, Falk came back into the study. He read his notes to the cobbler, and let

him verify them. An unnecessary measure, it would seem, for a man of his perceptive abilities.

"You'll have to be on your toes early tomorrow, too," said Falk to him, "and ring me up as soon as he comes home. Don't oversleep now—and if you cheat me—"

The cobbler swore a frightful oath as to his honest intentions. Falk showed him out himself —out of consideration for Mrs. Jörgensen.

When he came back into his room, Miller sat in the chair by the writing desk, smoking his indispensable "Sunka."

"Well, what did my 'brother-in-law' have to say?" he asked smilingly.

"He told me something about our mutual friend the printer— By the way, does Lange know him?"

"I don't believe so. I think Nielsen made his debut into Elly's life after the break with Lange.— Didn't you leave the room here a few minutes? I thought I heard the door open and close."

"Yes, I was in the bedroom to telephone to Holm to shadow the cobbler. Afterwards, I detained the fellow a bit so as to give Holm time to get up here."

Miller whistled comprehensively.

"What did he have to say about my friend the printer anyway?"

Falk told him:

"And he also insisted that Nielsen was away on a trip today."

"Well, we can ring Elly up and find out for sure if it will interest you. Poor girl, this must be an uncomfortable afternoon for her."

"I would like to get her out of the place," admitted Falk, "in order to have the flat searched."

"I'll try it," granted Miller, and asked for her number. "Although it's a kind of treason to her and—hello," he cut short his moral scruples: "Is this Elly? This is Preben speaking. Is Nielsen there? Oh, he's gone, has he? Well, that's fine —Shall we go out together this evening? Well, then just as you say—I'll be home in the course of a half hour—then I'll expect you—au revoir."

He rang off.

"Poor girl!" he said, shaking his head. "I could hear that she was quite beside herself. But I must be getting along. Good-bye."

Falk retained his hand in his:

"Does this woman really mean anything to you?"

Miller gave a shrug.

"There are some people," he dogmatized, "who live by virtue of their shortcomings. I think that I am one of them."

"Because it is not yet altogether clear that she is not implicated in Nielsen's affairs."

"She knows nothing whatsoever about them," he assured the other. "And as for me—don't worry. If the worst should happen, and she should get into trouble, and she really means something to me, I have a revolver home in my writing desk! A life of sorrow is not worth the living. Even happiness is not perfect."

Just then the telephone rang.

"I'll go out by myself," said Miller. "You answer it."

Falk nodded shortly, and picked up the receiver.

It was his agent, Holm, calling:

"Elly Hansen has just left the house," he reported.

"But Nielsen hasn't shown up yet?"

Falk heard Miller slam the outside door.

"Is there a Yale lock on the door to the flat?"

"No, an ordinary lock."

"Well, you just let yourself into the place, and find out if the printer is there. They say, however, that he left half an hour ago."

"That is simply impossible. We have watched so carefully that he couldn't possibly have slipped out unnoticed."

"Do you think that the lady has had any visitors today?"

"Yes, your friend, Mr. Preben Miller went up there about three o'clock, but only stayed there about half an hour."

"A quarter of an hour," corrected Falk.

"No, it was precisely half past four when he came out of the door for I noticed the time by the clock at the coffee dealer's here. And the court house clock struck the half hour also."

"All right, first see to it that the place is searched. If you find the printer there, you don't have to worry about his calling for the police. But be careful anyway. Ring the bell first—four short rings."

"All right, we will do that."

"By the way, was Elly Hansen carrying anything?"

"Yes, she had a small satchel with her."

"Hm, all right."

Falk rang off, and lit a cigar. He heard Willing moving around in his room upstairs—Mrs. Jörgensen throwing coal in the stove in the living room—the storm howling outside.

Falk tried to go over the whole case—detail by detail—but improbabilities cropped up one after another.

How had Nielsen gotten into Saabye's house that night? Where did he learn about the combination to the safe? And, lastly, how had he, who, to all appearances, was an amateur in the criminal game, managed to operate so tracklessly, so soundlessly, and create this net of evidence which was closing in on Einar Lange.

Unless he had—and everything led away from that—been an accomplice of the young artist, who in any case had not killed Saabye. Or of any person who had a close knowledge of the dead man's habits and rooms. The last was, when all was said and done, the most plausible. But the same person must also have known of the relations existing between Saabye and his foster-son. Had known that the latter was to stay there that night, that the money for the rent had not been brought to the bank, that Lange slept very heavily, etc., etc.

The only one who knew all this, and whose presence in the house at the time of the murder had been proved was the arrested Einar Lange—and the house-keeper!

Falk did not continue his deductions. The idea

of the house-keeper as the murderer or the murderer's accomplice was and remained ridiculous! And she was—theoretically—the only one, upon whom any suspicion could fall. She and Lange!

Perhaps the printer, Nielsen, was the murderer? Falk had no other proof of it than the bloody 10 kroner note, which could have become bloody in many other quite different ways—Thorvald Hansen was no marked disciple of the truth.

And it was queer about that hour that both Miller and the cobbler put at a quarter past three but which Holm and his aides had declared to be half past three. For Miller must have known when he left Elly Hansen, particularly, as he had looked at the clock across the way.

On the other hand—oh, well, life was full of mysteries! Falk smiled. The Lord knew what the result of Holm's "burglary" would be.

The thought had hardly crossed his mind when the telephone rang. It was Holm. He was up in Elly's flat and had searched it from end to end without finding anything of interest. The kitchen had been locked on the inside with the key in the lock when he came up there:

"Nielsen was not there!"

Holm's colleague had at the same time—and also without result—examined the kitchen stairs

and the court. It was quite incomprehensible, this about the printer. Particularly as he had to go out by the street door, and because he was neither well known nor looked up to by the neighbours, in which case he could have taken refuge in one of the near-by houses.

"Stick it out another 24 hours," said Falk encouragingly to the somewhat crestfallen detective. "Let your partner watch the house, and meanwhile find out what you can about Elly Hansen. Try especially to find out where she was the evening before last between 9 and 12, and whether any one has seen Nielsen in that space of time, and where. If you can get me some information about the lady's life and habits, do that also. But don't give up."

Just then Mrs. Jörgensen knocked on the door, and opened it.

"Dinner is ready," she said.

Falk rang off, and hurried into the dining room. He was ravenously hungry. Willing was already there, waiting for him. They sat down in silence. Falk did not reply to Willing's conventional remarks and questions. He only ate—and pondered.

At last it was too much for the secretary. He had spoken to Falk without any answer:

"You are extremely pensive, Mr. Falk," he finally said a bit stiffly, "would it be impertinent to inquire why you are so preoccupied?"

"Not at all," smiled Falk, as if suddenly coming to. "I'm grappling with a surface wound, a nicked knife, a dent in a watch, and a quarter of an hour, and they won't come right."

Willing asked no more questions.

CHAPTER VIII

THE court house clock struck midnight, and sang its deep, metallic psalm over the freezing, snow-white city. The houses cast shadows deep and dark as the graves of oblivion. The streets seemed to be only strips of frozen snow—narrow and wide. The lamps burned high and clear.

A broad-shouldered patrolman sauntered back and forth before a Rathskeller obliquely across from the corner of Enghavevej and Vesterbro Street. His hands were clasped behind his back. He was deep in thought, and now and then warmed his frozen hands in a resounding clap, and glanced about him as if incidentally. The street car going towards Valby was already down near the "Black Horse." Few people were to be seen on Vesterbro Street. It was 13 below zero, and people stayed indoors.

The officer took another glance about him. A man came walking down Enghavevej, towards Vesterbro Street, huddled up in an old ulster, and with a slouch hat pulled down over his eyes. He

seemed to be shivering. The officer was also very cold. He did not hesitate very long, but dashed up to the door by the side of the café, and down into the cellar where the kitchen was. The door opened hurriedly to his knock.

The tall man in the ulster had stopped on the corner of Enghavevej. He was evidently waiting for some one. He started violently when he heard the tinkling noise of a bell at the café door only a few paces from him, but otherwise did not stir.

The cobbler came shivering out on the street towards him but stopped with an oath when the tall man drew his attention to him with a low whistle.

The cobbler stood like a pointer scenting game, suddenly stretched out his arms, and drew near the man, saying with an assumed, hearty somewhat sniffling manner:

"Oh, it's you, Nielsen? I didn't know you, old pal."

"I've got some other duds on," smiled Nielsen. "I froze to death in the old ones. Let's go this way." He pointed down Enghavevej.

The cobbler glanced at him furtively. He could see only part of Nielsen's face. The rest was hidden by the ulster collar, by his glasses, and the brim of his hat.

"Well, you got my letter then," said Nielsen.

"Yes, sure I did. Anyway, we agreed to meet here at 12 o'clock."

"I only meant—"

"Oh, that little tussle we had," smiled the cobbler evilly. "No, a thing like that you forget, and besides a fellow's got a heart after all and wouldn't destroy a pal for the sake of a few cents."

"Have you the bill on you?"

"Yes, I have," said the cobbler and barely hid a cunning smile. He did not notice the sinister gleam in the other's eyes.

"All right," nodded Nielsen. Now and then he turned as if listening for something.

"Anybody coming?" asked the cobbler who noticed it.

"No, no,—no one."

They turned down Mathaeus Street.

"We had better go down to your place and settle the matter," said the printer. "I've a few drops of the stuff that cheers on me. For it is a bit cool."

The cobbler's eyes gleamed.

"You're a fine fellow, Nielsen."

"I am to my friends as they are to me," said Nielsen, and added: "The old man ain't in there, is he?"

"No, he's up in his room."

The cobbler opened the door to the cellar, and looked up at Nielsen who stood upon the street lighting a cigarette. He started violently.

"I'll be damned," he swore and felt a sudden fear.

"What's the matter?" Nielsen hurried down to him.

The cobbler still stood staring and muttered:

"That was the second time tonight—"

"What?"

"—that I didn't know you."

"Nonsense," grunted Nielsen, "get that door locked and let's get inside and have something to warm us up. It's colder than the north pole here!"

The cobbler locked it while Nielsen lit the lamp in the back room and seated himself on the bed.

"By the way, the bottle's in my overcoat pocket. In the outer one."

The cobbler found it and took it out. Suddenly he turned fawningly to the printer.

"Why so silent, old man?" he said but became afraid again.

Nielsen sat over there in the shadow, and smiled in such a sinister way.

"What are you smiling like that for?" he stammered, "and why are you wearing gloves?"

"I'm smiling," said the other, "because I'm with a friend, a real friend. For you are that, aren't you?"

"Of course," answered the cobbler, taking out a couple of battered cups and pouring cognac into them:

"But the gloves?"

"I'm wearing them because I'm cold."

The cobbler nodded reassured, and handed Nielsen one of the cups: "Your health, comrade!"

Nielsen returned the toast, and shivered suddenly:

"It's damn cold in here," he said standing up and tucking the rug in front of the court window in more closely.

"There's a draft from the kitchen, too," he grumbled, and went out there. But there was nothing to do there.

"That rug helped a little," he said and smiled his sinister smile. "You've got a good start already, Hansen. Most people can't afford that much hootch."

"Some of the fellows stood treat," explained the cobbler.

"And you smell like a night bird," sniffed the printer, "but maybe 'the fellows' are from a perfume factory— It's Swedish Theresa's perfume,

too, I think you told me. But she isn't made of money. And money—"

The cobbler protested in a confused manner. Nielsen smiled steadily.

"Well, let's get down to business," he said finally, "and don't forget the booze."

"The lamp is smoking," said the cobbler and turned it down.

"Here y'are," said Nielsen, and took out the 40 kroner and laid them on the table.

The cobbler gave him a blood stained 10 krone note. Nielsen put it indifferently in his pocket without looking at it.

"But we're forgetting the bottle," he laughed and filled the cup. The cobbler had already been somewhat tipsy when he came out of the café, and now he drank quickly. Nielsen tossed the empty bottle over on the bed:

"There's another bottle in my pocket," he said. He had only sipped at his cup now and then while the cobbler was becoming more and more drunk.

"You're a fellow after my own heart," babbled the cobbler, "a regular guy."

"Yes, wasn't it lucky," smiled Nielsen "that you didn't snitch on me?"

"Snitch—snitch!" The cobbler faltered a little but then continued virtuously indignant:

"I don't snitch on my friends, by God!"

"But if you were not my friend?"

"Then I'd get in trouble, too, myself," grunted the cobbler craftily.

"Yes, if you went to the police! But if this Falk—"

The cobbler strove to look unbelievably stupid:

"If he what?" he babbled.

"If he had offered money, and had promised you protection in other ways?"

"Yes, if?" hiccoughed the cobbler. "If I had done anything like that you wouldn't be sitting here, would you?"

"Oh, you could have told some fish story about not being able to get a hold of me before tomorrow."

"And what good would that do me?" asked the other and held the cup to his mouth without drinking.

Nielsen only smiled.

"What good would it do?" mumbled the cobbler both angry and frightened. "Answer me, in the devil's name!"

Nielsen winked at him waggishly:

"In that way, you could get money both from him and from me."

The cobbler laughed scornfully.

"You don't think this Falk is so thick as that, to let me keep the bill, the bloody bill which is part of the evidence."

"No, but say you had done it anyway."

"But hell, you got it from me only a few minutes ago."

"Yes, I got a wrinkled ten kroner note, with a blood stain on it. But Lord save us, such a note is easy to stain. Let me see your hands!"

He suddenly seized the cobbler's hands so the cup fell on the bed, and pulled him over into the light. The cobbler's whole body shook. His face was livid.

There was an insignificant puncture on the left hand!

Nielsen laughed and let go his hand:

"You must be cold, Hansen. Help yourself to the goods."

He handed the cobbler the flask. The latter put it to his mouth, and took a deep draught.

"I pricked myself on one of the awls this afternoon," he explained.

"You did, eh? Well, it's none of my business," smiled the other. "Of course, I believe you. If I didn't, all I would have to do would be to look at the number on the bill. For I remember it well."

The cobbler took another drink from the flask. Nielsen had again seated himself on the bed.

"No, I'm not afraid that any one will snitch on me," he said with a low laugh. "It would only be a living hell for whoever did it, even if I didn't kill him at once."

The cobbler sat and looked at him sluggishly.

"But you're not drinking," protested Nielsen smilingly, and handed him the flask.

The cobbler dropped it. He was swimmingly drunk, but fear gnawed at his vitals.

He couldn't endure the other's smile. Suddenly he blazed up in a sudden fit of rage:

"What the hell are you grinning about?"

Nielsen stopped smiling, and listened:

"Shh!"

The cobbler paused, but heard nothing.

"What are you listening for?" he asked soon after, and seemed about to collapse from drunkenness.

"For the beating of Life's pulse," whispered Nielsen evilly. "It's so easy for one to die, and to be put down in the darkness among the worms."

The cobbler shuddered despite his fuddled state.

But then Nielsen repeated his "shh" and the cobbler also heard a soft scraping up on the street.

Nielsen stole over to the rug in front of the window and put his ear to it. His face was dark but determined as he turned away.

The cobbler had fallen over on the bed where he lay and snored. Nielsen put out the light and again tiptoed over to the window. Somebody was moving softly about the court. He heard the person stop and listen, with his hand on the window pane.

Nielsen stood still as death.

Ten minutes passed. All was still except for the snoring of the cobbler. He heard the stranger up in the court tiptoe away, through the gateway, out to the street. He heard his footsteps ring on the cobblestones. Further and further away.

He breathed more easily. Still he waited several minutes. All was quiet in the moonlit court. He lifted the curtain cautiously, and peeped out. The court was empty. He let the rug fall back.

He stood and reflected an instant, then lit a match and looked around the room. A small gas stove stood in the corner toward the court. He noted its position, and stole over to the cobbler, and bent over him. He had seen him put the 40 kroner in his breast pocket. He lit another match, and took the notes out cautiously without disturb-

ing the cobbler. In the pocket above that he found three 10 kroner notes.

"It has been an expensive business," muttered Nielsen, and took the money. "Go to hell then," and he nodded to the cobbler with an evil smile.

The match went out.

He opened the door to the shop in the darkness, and examined the window closely. No, there were no cracks to speak of.

He stopped a moment at the gas stove, then hurried out in the kitchen, and locked the door behind him.

"He won't be cold now—the darling thing!" and he laughed silently.

The court was still white and deserted as far as he could see through the frosty and dirty windows. A cat sneaked over to the gateway, and turned into it but stopped suddenly and went back.

Nielsen swore softly, and pulled his hat over his eyes. Then he opened the kitchen door, locked it behind him, and went up into the court. However, he did not go out on the street but into the next court, which one could see from the gateway, and which together with various other courts, reached right down to Dannebrog Street.

He went along apparently unsuspecting, though

cautiously. But in reality, he was listening, and he heard footsteps behind him. When he reached a connecting archway he went hurriedly through it, but ducked back at once and hid in its deepest shadow.

Several seconds passed. Then a man suddenly showed himself out in the moonlit courtyard. He seemed to hesitate but soon after he crept into the archway.

Nielsen stood ready to spring. The other had no idea that he was there. He slipped by, nearly touching the printer, but almost at the same time uttered a low groan. He went down with an iron blow from Nielsen's fist. He lay senseless.

"When he wakes up in a quarter of an hour or so," muttered Nielsen, as he changed part of his clothing in the darkness, "the cobbler will be dead, and from now on Nielsen the printer exists no more. We'll see then whether Mister Falk can arrest Saabye's murderer."

CHAPTER IX

"THE detective bureau called up," said Willing the next day to Falk. The latter had appeared in the study at the unusually early hour of half past nine in the morning.

Falk lit a cigar.

"And what good news did they have?"

"Unfortunately, none! The man assigned to follow the cobbler shadowed him all day. And the cobbler spent money right and left and drunk heavily and visited a woman of ill repute. At twelve o'clock on the corner of Enghavevej and Vesterbro Street he had met a man who went home with him.

"This man left the cobbler about one o'clock and sneaked away through some courts that lead up to Dannebrog Street. The detective still followed him but the stranger must have taken alarm. Anyway in one of the darkest and deepest archways, he," and Willing shuddered at the thought,

"took the detective by surprise and felled him to the ground."

Falk swore.

"And of course was gone when the man came to his senses again," ended Willing.

"Who was this fellow? Was it the printer?"

"No, the detective thought not. At any rate, he didn't look like the man you described. He was tall and thin it's true, but very much bent over and dressed quite differently from the printer. He had on a long worn ulster and wore a soft hat pulled down over his eyes. The man from the bureau had to go home. He hasn't recovered from the attack yet."

"Hm," growled Falk, "that was a nice bit of news. Have you any more Job's messages?"

"I don't know," and the offended Willing shrugged his shoulders, "what you will call Jensen-Skandrup's message. He rang up about a half hour ago. The young artist had been confronted by the body of his foster-father."

"But it led to nothing," continued Falk and nodded. "Am I wrong?"

"No, decidedly not. He only wept and kissed the old man's brow. Jensen-Skandrup called the affair 'a blurred film'—"

"The cobbler, Thorvald Hansen, didn't ring up?" asked Falk.

Willing shook his head: "No."

"I should have put Holm on his trail," said Falk irritably and picked up one of the newspapers.

As he did so some one rang loudly out in the entry. An instant later he heard Preben Miller demand to see him at once. Falk opened the door to the corridor himself:

"What in the world is the matter with you?" he asked—astonished. Miller was always so self-possessed. Falk gave his friend his hand. He was astounded at the other's appearance. Preben Miller looked like a sick man. His face was ashen, he had dark circles under his eyes and his clothes were untidy as if he had thrown them on without thinking, he, who always used an hour to dress in.

"What in the world is the matter with you?" repeated Falk.

"I must talk with you at once, now," moaned Miller.

Willing, who had greeted him with a stiff bow, withdrew discreetly to the living-room.

"What is it, then?" asked Falk.

Miller gave him a letter. His hand shook, and his voice trembled. "Read this!" he said, and sank down with his face hidden in his hands.

Falk read:

"*Dear, dear Preben,*

"I was distressed and discouraged yesterday, and I would not tell you why. But now I must confess to you. We cannot see each other again. You cannot love a woman who has been a murderer's. Yes, a murderer's. Nielsen admitted to me this afternoon that he had killed a man, an old man—Mr. Saabye. He admitted it because my brother dropped various hints on the subject, and finally accused him of being the murderer, and because I demanded an explanation. Nielsen has always been my evil spirit. He has had a peculiar and fearful hold on me. The only consolation is that now I am free, though only to live in distress and misfortune. I, myself, advised him to go away, and he left the house here in disguise. I think he has gone to Sweden. I am in deep despair, and I ask you not to try to see me. Though you are the only one I have ever loved.

"Your brokenhearted

"ELLY."

"I didn't know she meant so much to you," said Falk sympathetically, and gave him the letter.

"I've tried in vain to get her to talk to me up to this morning," he groaned, "but when she heard it was I, she rang off. Her voice sounded so sor-

rowful. I am so afraid that she, in her despair, will do something insane. And still, under these circumstances, I must do my work."

He looked up with a grimacing smile.

"I must go to a first night at the Dagmar Theatre tonight," he said, "and the play is a comedy!"

"Can't you get some one else to cover the performance?" proposed Falk.

Miller shook his head despondently:

"That won't do," he said. "I've been behind so much lately in my work in the paper. But under these circumstances, it's hellish torture."

Falk inclined his head sympathetically:

"You must excuse me a moment," he said. "I must report the matter to the police. I'll borrow this letter for a few days, too."

Miller nodded again. Falk went out and gave Willing his instructions. A moment later he was back beside his friend:

"Willing's gone to ring up headquarters. I have hopes that we'll get our hands on the printer. It won't be the first time the Swedish police have helped us—by the way, do you know where Nielsen and Elly met each other?"

"Yes, she told me herself," said Miller in a low voice. "It was at a labour meeting this spring.

She had gone to it because she had never been to one before."

The ringing of the telephone interrupted them. It was Holm.

"I didn't find out much about the lady," he reported. "She's well liked, and for the last year has had no other companions than Mr. Preben Miller, and Nielsen. The green-grocer's little girl does the cleaning, and runs errands for her. The evening in question she came home alone about nine o'clock. Shortly after that, all was dark in her flat. None of the tenants saw the printer there that night."

Falk hung up.

He felt sorry for Miller, who stood by the window with downcast head. But there was no time for lamentation.

"I must go out at once," he said. "Out to my friend, Thorvald Hansen! The cobbler," he added as explanation, for the other had looked at him so uncomprehendingly.

"Let me go along," proposed the author.

"Surely! But won't it be a little painful?"

"Ah, well, evil must drive out evil."

Falk called a taxi, and gave the house-keeper instructions in case Thorvald Hansen should show up while he was away.

"Let him wait in here! I'll ring up every quarter of an hour."

It had begun to snow when they came out on the street to the waiting taxi. They jumped into it quickly.

"Saxo Street way down near Isted Street," cried Falk to the chauffeur.

They sat in silence for a long time. Then Miller burst out:

"This is terrible, this affair about Nielsen."

"We'll get hold of him," nodded Falk confidently. "In a day his description will be all over Sweden and Germany."

Miller shivered.

"Are you cold?" asked Falk.

"No, I shudder to think that he has been her lover, and that I have touched the hand which guided the razor across the old man's throat. Murder is dreadful."

Falk gave a shrug.

"We press so many highly respected hands that have committed murder, but are out of reach of the law. Or what do you say of the wealthy betrayer who kills the happiness in a good but poor woman's life. He exists not only in novels and the movies. He is right among us. Or the employer who starves his workers. Or the parents

who neglect and illtreat their children. I could give you hundreds of examples. The world is full of murderers."

"But to cut off a person's life," protested Miller, "to stop a heart from beating; to cause an organism to stiffen so that it cannot function any more; that seems to me worse than anything else."

Falk grunted, and looked out of the window.

They turned swiftly down Saxo Street. The snow fell faster and faster. The dirty white poorhouse stood there and froze. Here and there, in an archway, people with an out-of-work look could be seen; always there like the morning dew. They pressed themselves into the corner of the archway, with their hands dug down in their pockets, and sixpenny hats pulled over their eyes, bent over by the cold and dully stamping in the snow that blew on their legs, trying to keep the blood in circulation in their alcohol-soaked bodies.

The taxi stopped with a violent jerk outside the cobbler's cellar. Old Hansen stood down there profanely tugging away at the door knob. His teeth chattered with cold.

"Is no one home?" asked Falk and told the driver to wait.

"Yes, he must be there," growled the old man.

"But the door is always open at this time of day. I suppose the beast is sleeping."

"Did you try the kitchen door?" Falk asked.

"Yeh, that's locked too."

"Maybe your son has gone out?"

"He never goes out as early as this," and the old man shook his head.

"Well, we can take a look," proposed Falk and pulled a bunch of skeleton keys out of his pocket, and began to smile at the old man's surprised expression.

"You never saw anything like that before?"

The old man tried to look more stupid than usual.

Falk opened the door at once, and went into the store, but stopped and sniffed the air:

"There must be a leaky gas-pipe around here somewhere," he said.

The old man could smell nothing, and Falk could see that the gas jets over the door and in the window were both closed; they had not been used for a long time. The old man was tugging at the door to the back room.

"That's locked, too," he growled harshly, "and from the inside; he must have had a fine load to carry last night."

"Your son doesn't usually lock up so carefully, eh?" asked Falk.

"No, he never locked this door before."

Falk's face had become grave. He hastily pushed the key inside to the floor and opened the door.

All three jumped back several paces. Even the old man was almost half strangled by the gaseous stench that penetrated into the shop. Falk quickly opened the shop door and transom.

"Where are the gas cocks in the room?" he asked the old man who with difficulty stammered out an explanation.

Miller had fled up to the street. His face was livid, and he still felt as if he were strangling, although the air there was icy cold.

Falk pressed his handkerchief to his mouth and nose and ran into the room, and over to the gas stove. Yes, both cocks were wide open! He shut them with trembling fingers and staggered back to the shop.

"We must wait several minutes until the gas is driven out," he panted to Miller who again had come into the shop. "You'd better stay out here!"

But Miller wanted to come in. The air was much clearer now, too. The old man joined them.

It was half dark in the room but when Falk tore the rug from the window the grey winter light stole in over the bare, dirty board-floor, the naked table and the battered chairs. Over two empty cognac bottles and some broken cups. And across the bed!

The three stopped before it, gripped by the moment's horror. For upon a heap of dirty rags in it lay the cobbler's corpse. From his position it seemed as if he had been seized by a sudden cramp. His neck hung down horribly from the head of the bed. His mouth was wide open with the tongue bulging out of it.

They were silent for a moment.

"He always was a dirty bum," grunted the old man angrily. That was his epitaph for his son.

"Call the police," Falk bade Miller. "There's a telephone over at Nikolajsen's."

Miller hurried over. In the meantime Falk searched the dead man's pockets. There was only a little change in his pocket. The cobbler had been unable to use all of the 100 kroner in the course of the day before. The door to the kitchen was also locked from the outside. To be sure, the key was in the lock, but Falk discovered that it was also used to lock the other door. The criminal had, no doubt, tossed it away up in the courtyard.

It was found there later.

But who was the murderer?

For the agent from the detective bureau insisted that the man whom the cobbler had met and who without doubt was his murderer, was not Nielsen, and he was the man who would have had the greatest interest in getting the cobbler out of the way.

Falk began to examine the room. Perhaps the murderer had left some clue! Old Hansen had sat down on one of the chairs and swayed back and forth, muttering unintelligible things.

Shortly after, Miller came back. The police would be there at once.

Falk had stopped before a cupboard in the shop. It was locked. He picked the lock. At first he saw only a heap of dirty rags and pieces of old leather. But then he suddenly noticed a Japanese paper weight, cut in the shape of a dog! And several other trinkets, together with a bunch of lock picks, and other burglars' tools.

"I have made an interesting discovery," and he turned quickly to Miller with an air of triumph. "Do you remember those mysterious burglaries that were committed this spring and summer?"

"Yes, certainly I do."

"A rare marble paper-weight was stolen from one of the places. The papers described it, and so hindered the thieves from selling or otherwise disposing of it. Here it is. The only thing I can't see, is how the cobbler had the brains to make these raids. For they were really remarkable of their kind."

Miller nodded.

"Still waters—" he cited, but was interrupted by the hooting of a klaxon up in the street.

"It's the police," he said, after looking out. "Our old friend, Jensen-Skandrup."

"Your Majesty!" they suddenly heard old Hansen babble. He had gotten up from the chair in the back room and now stood on the threshold of the shop. His wasted features shone:

"Your Majesty!" he repeated and stretched out his hand to the Inspector, "does me too much honour!"

Then he fell to the floor and began to weep and moan and suddenly became uncontrollable and thrashed his arms wildly:

"Your Majesty, Majesty!" he bellowed. "Where is your hand—your hand, your hand!"

"We must get him to a hospital at once," said Jensen-Skandrup, turning to one of the policemen.

"That's clear enough—he's got the D. T.'s all right."

And then Falk and Miller continued their explanation.

CHAPTER X

PREBEN MILLER, like Falk, liked to lie abed late. He was lying there, stretching himself, comfortably smoking his "Sunka" cigarette, and apparently in the best of humour, when the door bell rang.

Who could that be?

His creditors had given up hope long ago. Their visits were always useless. He had a way of treating them that made them feel like intrusive beggars. And the letter-carrier—by agreement with Miller—never rang but threw the letters in through a letter slot. Money drafts never came—for there is something called advance royalty and Miller was always in advance both at his publishers and at his paper.

It couldn't be Elly because she had keys to the apartment. Nor the King's bailiff. He wasn't due until next week sometime when he would as usual go away with a long face. For Miller only rented furnished rooms. But who could it be—! Miller thrust a pyjama-clad leg out of the bed. Could the cleaning woman have gone crazy and

come at this time about four hours ahead of time! He could hardly believe that.

The ringing continued with disrespectful vigour. Miller's expression was one of deep surprise. Well, he would open the door just enough so that he could—if it was a creditor—slam it in his face with a passing remark about bothering people at that time of the night.

Then he heard a calling card being put through the letter slot, and the person went away and tramped noisily down the stairs. He waited until the foot-steps had died away and then stole out in the hall and picked up the card!

It was a white blank card!

He went back to the bedroom swearing softly and was just about to get into bed when the door bell rang again. If some one was trying to make a fool of him he would soon show them—

In an instant he was out in the next room and at the door to the corridor. He opened it almost noiselessly. He had in his haste upset the contents of the light waste-paper basket that stood under his writing table, but without noticing it. He stood ready to jump and opened the door little by little. Then suddenly as the letter slot was pushed up, he heard a cheery voice say triumphantly:

"Come on, open up! For you are home. The card is gone!"

It was Arne Falk.

Miller opened the door in unfeigned astonishment:

"But what is—? I never thought you were up so early."

"Well, I am a little proud of it," smiled Falk modestly: "But I have some important news for you."

"Will you come in?" They went in. "You must excuse me a moment. I'll go in here and get some clothes on. But go ahead anyway. I'm all ears."

He let the bedroom door stand ajar. Falk threw himself into a chair by the writing table.

"I've just come from headquarters. Lange has been released."

"Does Ada Stock know it?"

"Yes, I rang her up myself last night. She came over to meet him."

"It was quite touching, I suppose?"

"Yes, I admit that I was quite envious," sighed Falk.

"That's nothing to sigh about," said Miller consolingly. "Remember what Wilde says, 'One can

be happy with any woman—if one doesn't love her'— But how goes it with your printer?"

"We haven't got him yet."

"Was—was Elly cross-examined?" asked Miller, stammering slightly.

"Yes, for a long time last night."

Miller sighed.

"And came through all right too," continued Falk. "District Attorney Jörgensen, with whom I talked later, is of the opinion that she had nothing to do with either the murder or the burglaries. And she hasn't seen much of her brother either."

"Well, thank the Lord that she came through all right! How did she take it anyway? For you saw her I suppose?"

"She took it sensibly enough," and Falk lit a cigar. "You have recovered too. You were quite down in the mouth yesterday."

"Yes, you must reason your way in a situation like this. I was afraid at first that she would commit suicide. But then she would have done it at once."

"Yes, of course!—How was the première last night?" asked Falk smilingly. He sat with Miller's review before him.

"To tell the truth, I don't know. I certainly had other things to think about."

"You weren't especially kind either to the actors or to the author."

"Kind!" grunted Miller scornfully. "Who in hell can demand kindness when the critic is in trouble clear up to his eyes?"

"—Or one's house-keeper burns the steak for dinner," continued Falk mischievously; "or his girl has gone back on him; or the King's Bailiff raids one's house! No, of course, critics are influenced by those things— But now you are in good enough humour to praise 'Fairy Play' which lies on your table here?"

Falk stretched out his hand for the book, and began to turn its pages.

"Apparently," admitted Miller, and began to strop his razor on a leather strop.

In the middle of the book, Falk came upon a long, golden hair—a woman's: "I didn't know that it was in the bookstores yet," he remarked.

"Oh, yes, I got it last night through the mail. With a dedication from the author. For I am of some importance after all," laughed Miller.

"Did you have any visitor last night after the theatre?" asked Falk.

"No, I went home alone."

"I thought that you had some women friends here?"

"No, I didn't feel like it. All this with Elly—you understand.—And even if I am thoughtless, I—"

"Yes, but it could have been Elly herself—"

"Elly? Are you crazy? I haven't seen her since the night before last."

"Well, well. There was no offence meant." For Miller's tone had sounded somewhat irritated.

"No, but can't you see—" The rest of Miller's reply was lost in the noise of a passing street car. he had opened his bedroom windows.

Falk knocked the ashes from his cigar, and then noticed the overturned waste basket. He righted it, and laboriously began to put the waste paper back in it.

"Either you are a very industrious man," he said, "or else you have a very neglectful cleaning woman."

"Why, may I ask?"

"Your waste-paper basket is bulging with stuff."

"Well, it was emptied yesterday noon."

"But, what in the deuce—!" Falk stared in surprise at something that he saw under a crumpled piece of cardboard, and the last of the basket's contents he had not yet put back:

A broken india-rubber plate with four front teeth!

Remarkable long, yellow teeth, that he knew so well. Nielsen's peculiar front teeth had looked like that!

For a moment he was overcome. Then he hurriedly put the demolished gum in his pocket, and happened in the same instant to glance at the book in which he had found the long, yellow hair.

That hair was of just the same color and texture as Elly Hansen's. He knew that she had keys to the apartment—and that Miller had been at the Dagmar Theatre, where the performance lasted until eleven o'clock. Elly Hansen had been cross-examined from 7 to a quarter past 8 o'clock.

Perhaps, she—without Miller's knowledge had arranged—up in Miller's apartments—a rendezvous with Nielsen, who did not dare to visit her at her home. The journey to Sweden could have been postponed. Nielsen and she could have had any number of things to talk about.

In order to disguise himself, before he ventured out in a city whose police lay in wait for him, Nielsen could have destroyed the false teeth. It was certain that no one, unless perhaps Elly Hansen, could have had the slightest idea that those teeth, his most conspicuous characteristic, were false. His toothless mouth would, therefore, be an excellent disguise.

And had he at the same time thrown away his glasses and had had a chance to change his clothes, he would have been well-nigh unrecognizable.

It was, of course, unpardonable carelessness to have thrown the false teeth in the waste basket. But even the best of crooks make mistakes—and often concerning vital matters. The full basket, which Elly no doubt had told him was emptied every day, had probably tempted him. The plate he could not have burnt, as Miller would have been able to smell it on his arrival.

Perhaps Nielsen had taken some of Miller's clothes. For Elly could easily have disposed of his old ones.

Falk opened the bedroom door. Miller was washing his face after shaving. The door of the clothes closet stood wide open. Only three suits of clothes hung there.

"Is that all of your wardrobe?" smiled Falk.

"Yes, these three suits are all my earthly possessions. The rest are all at 'Uncle's'!"

"But you've some old clothes?"

"Not a single piece. There's a second hand clothes dealer over in Victoria Street, and he buys all my old stuff. There isn't as much as an old vest around now."

Falk looked at his watch:

"I must go now," he said.

"Oh, but wait and let us eat breakfast together," protested Miller. "That's an invitation!"

"—which I cannot afford to accept," smiled Falk a bit sarcastically.

"To think that you can be sarcastic—so early in the day."

Miller showed him smilingly to the door:

"You are a queer fellow," he said. "I'll remember that little trick with the calling card. You can't fool me twice."

"No, that's so, you're not a detective," and Falk disappeared with a cheery farewell.

Elly Hansen was at her dressing table when the door bell rang.

"I'm not at home," she said to the green-grocer's little girl who was mopping the floor. The girl hurried out and opened the door.

"Miss Hansen ain't home," she heard her pipe.

"Oh, is that so!"

It was a man's voice. She heard him push the little girl aside and step into the hall. That was too much.

With one little spring, Elly was in the door to the hall. There was a man standing there:

"Didn't you understand what the girl said. I'm not at home to any one."

"You are at home to me," said the man smilingly. "No one escapes his fate."

Unabashed he opened the door of the living room, and stepped in. It was Arne Falk! She recognized him at once, and was afraid.

"What do you want of me?" she asked shortly.

"I want to give you some advice," said Falk.

"About what, may I ask?" She tried in vain to appear calm. Her eyes were anxious and irresolute. Now and then she wet her dry lips.

"This, of telling you where Saabye's murderer is to be found. We are aware that you know his hiding place, and that he is now here in the city."

"Then you know more than I do," she said defiantly.

"We know furthermore," continued Falk undisturbed, "that you met him last night in a house on old Kingsway. I don't think I need to describe it more closely for you."

She resembled a spectre as she stood there. She did not speak; only shook her head in a sort of automatic defiance.

"The reason I am asking you to help us," Falk went on, "is that your so-called printer, Nielsen—"

"So called," she started violently but otherwise restrained herself.

"Yes, so called," repeated Falk. "For he is no more a printer than you or I."

"Why don't you arrest him then if you know him?" she demanded. It was as if a light had suddenly dawned for her.

"Because we need a link in the chain of evidence. A link which I ask you to give us. You will not regret your helpfulness."

"Do you want it in writing?" She tried to make her tone seem bantering, but her glance in an unguarded moment roamed to the writing desk and rested on some paper and envelopes that lay there. Falk felt sure that something lay under there. But he also saw that the coincidence was giving him a helping hand:

"Yes, it's best to have it in writing, of course."

"I'll think it over," she said. "Let me have the pen and ink, please. I'll go in the bedroom with it. I wish to be alone for a moment."

Falk nodded in assent and handed her the writing materials. "I suppose I may use your telephone?"

"Yes, it's at your service."

He heard the maid scrubbing the floor in the

bedroom as Elly Hansen opened the door only to shut it at once behind her.

He asked for his own number. Willing answered the phone.

"This is Falk," he said, and heard the window in the bedroom being carefully closed, and some one tip-toe over to the door to the living room. The scrubbing had also ceased.

"We are on his trail," Falk went on.

"Whose trail?" asked Willing.

"All we've got to do is to smoke the fox out of his hole. We'll know in a few minutes, just where he is."

"I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about." Willing faltered in bewilderment.

"That's quite all right," said Falk and continued, "what did you say?"

Willing repeated his remark about not understanding. As Falk still did not answer he rang off after a few confused hellos.

Falk remained sitting at the telephone. Now and then he raised his voice as if he was answering a question. In reality he was listening to the slight noise from the bedroom where he heard Elly whispering to the cleaning girl, and then heard the latter go out by the kitchen door. An instant later, the scrubbing within was resumed. He knew that

it was Elly Hansen who sought to make him believe that the little girl was still in there.

Falk hung up the receiver, and looked for the wire. It went in a sweeping curve behind the writing table down to the carpeted floor. He bent down and snipped it in two. He heard the mop being laid aside, inside. An instant later Elly Hansen opened the door:

"Here is my confession," she said triumphantly, and handed him a sheet of paper.

The sheet was blank!

Falk shrugged his shoulders:

"He laughs best—" he said.

Just then the front door bell rang.

"Pardon me," he said and went out and opened the door. It was Holm.

"I caught the brat down in the hall. She certainly did howl. But I finally got the letter."

He gave it to Falk. Falk opened it and read:

"*My dearest one!*

They are on your track. You must flee. Telephone me your future address. Your faithful loving,

"ELLY."

Falk put it triumphantly back in the envelope again, and looked at the superscription.

"Good God!" he burst out. "I hadn't expected that!"

"You are not sick?" asked Holm sympathetically. Falk was quite pale.

"No, no. You'd better go, Holm. Come up to my place for your money tonight."

"Then the case is solved."

"Yes," Falk nodded and shut the door. He still held the letter in his hand.

"This is terrible," he muttered and turned quickly away. Elly Hansen stood behind him. She was like a lioness ready to fight to the death for her young. Her eyes gleamed; her nostrils quivered:

"Give me the letter," she hissed and grasped for it, but Falk quickly put it in his pocket.

In an instant she was back in the living room, and had closed the door behind her. He heard the key turn in the lock. Falk smiled moodily. He heard her pick up the receiver and demand a number. She repeated it and repeated it. And always without getting an answer.

Suddenly he heard her utter a cry of rage and despair, and collapse—sobbing bitterly.

She had discovered that the telephone wire had been cut. She could not warn the man she loved.

All was over, all, all—

Falk had a great deal to do that day, and it was past three o'clock when he came home. There

was a telephone message from Preben Miller. Some one had been in his apartment the night before. He thought it was Elly Hansen because he had found a long, golden hair strikingly like hers in the middle of a new book. But he did not understand what she was doing in his apartment without his knowledge. He wanted very much to talk with Falk about it.

"I'll go over to him at once," Falk decided. "Then he'll get the news first hand."

"What news?" asked Willing.

"That we will have our hands on Nielsen in the course of an hour."

CHAPTER XI

MILLER was working when Falk rang. The writer opened the door himself. He was clad in a silk-wadded bath-robe, lamb's-wool slippers, and brightly coloured socks. He was, as usual, smoking his "Sunka."

The reading lamp was lit in the room, and a cozy fire crackled in the stove. Miller's table was littered with books and manuscripts.

"Excuse me for a moment," he asked. "I must finish this review."

Falk sat down. The street cars went rattling by down on the street. The telephone wires sang. Miller's pen scratched feverishly. Now and then, a piece of coal exploded in the stove. Some minutes passed. Then Miller laid his pen aside, and turned to Falk with a cordial nod.

"Now I am at your service. I suppose Willing has told you I called up."

"Yes, he told me." Falk looked at him in a queer way.

"Why do you look at me like that?" asked Miller.

Falk lowered his eyes but did not answer.

"You're not feeling top-notch today," asked his friend with a smile.

"No," admitted Falk without looking up.

"How is the murder case getting along?"

"Very well."

"Have you found the printer?"

"Yes," Falk straightened up. His eyes did not leave Miller's face. The other was very pale.

"It's warm as the deuce here," Miller panted, and wiped his forehead. "Where did you get hold of him?"

"Why do you ask me that?"

"Because I am interested."

"Why do *you* ask me that?" repeated Falk with special emphasis on the pronoun.

Miller, slightly confused, shook his head.

"I don't understand you," he said.

"You will not understand me," Falk corrected.

Miller still appeared to be surprised.

Falk leaned towards him:

"Or perhaps you will deny that you, Preben Miller, and the man Nielsen are one and the same person?"

Miller stiffened and stared. He looked old at that moment.

"What do you know?" he asked hoarsely.

"I know all."

"All?"

"Or so much at any rate that our Nielsen, the printer, will serve a life's term in prison."

"For what?"

"For the murders of old Saabye, and Thorvald Hansen."

"And you have proof of your statement?"

Miller had regained something of his old confident manner again.

"Certain proof! Perhaps you'll be interested to hear it?"

"Very much," nodded the author and lit a cigarette.

"It all began with a note," said Falk, "on the back of which you wrote Capt. Stock's name. A mere bagatelle of 3600 kroner that was extended again and again, as long as Mortensen, the money lender, believed in your coming marriage with Miss Stock which you had hoodwinked him into believing a reality.

"About a month ago you proposed to Ada Stock and was rejected. I questioned her myself today, and she confessed although reluctantly. At the time you proposed, she confided to you under promise of secrecy that she loved Lange.

"And you knew what that meant to you. Some

fine day, Mortensen would demand payment on the overdue note. And he would simply refuse to extend it. He did it the very day Lange became engaged. You were forced to get the money.

"First you tried myself, and your other friend. We couldn't help you. Then you got the idea—through Elly Hansen—of blackmailing Lange, on the basis of his former relations with her, and his engagement to Ada Stock.

"And when that didn't work, you killed old Saabye. The note fell due the day after, and you paid it with the money you had stolen from the murdered man."

"I am really somewhat sceptical about the possibility that I could have gotten into his room," said Miller. "Everything was locked when he went to bed, and there were no strangers in the apartment. And the keys were in their place."

"Not when you left Saabye in the evening. The house-keeper's keys were not there. You had 'borrowed' them to get in with later on. But you put them carefully in their place again, following a well-laid plan. You also borrowed Lange's pocket-knife, and placed it in a compromising place in the corridor, after first filing some nicks in it, which should indicate that it had been used to cut the electric wire in two; which was an im-

possibility due to the thickness of the wire. You, no doubt, cut the wire with a pair of nippers."

"But Lange's bloody jacket and the handkerchief and gloves?"

"You borrowed them also. Just as you put the bloody notes in his pockets, and strewed some of them in front of the mantel-piece."

"Perhaps I also was the cause of his insane flight from the apartment?"

"Yes, because it was you and no one else who 'phoned him about Ada Stock's illness."

"When, then? We were together all of the time."

"When you went up to put your overcoat on."

"Really, this is all very interesting," sneered Miller. "There's only one little insignificant detail you left out, and that was that the old man was murdered while you and I were walking in peace and quiet down near the Independence Statue. But perhaps you think me capable of killing by hypnotism?"

"How does any one know when Saabye died?"

"By the watch which was found to be stopped just at that time."

"Quite right. But I found by means of my glass that there was a dent in the case, and that dent told me that some one had stopped the watch

by hitting it against his knee. Against your knee, for example."

"Yes, why not?" smiled Miller although not so confidently as before.

"Besides I quickly became convinced that Lange was not the murderer. The matter of the nicked pocket-knife caused me my first doubt. My next one was even more positive. For I happened to notice while I was up in the court house that Lange was left-handed."

Preben Miller started violently.

"What an idiot I was," he swore, "to have forgotten that."

"Yes, you should have started the cut from the other side," said Falk cynically. "Although that wouldn't have helped you. The cobbler betrayed you anyway. Why didn't you bribe him to keep silent?"

"Because he wasn't satisfied with the 40 kroner I offered him, and that was all I had at the time."

"What I don't understand," grunted Falk, "is why you masqueraded as the printer, Nielsen, unless you 'worked' together with the cobbler and wished to be unknown to him."

"Do you remember the mysterious robberies this spring and summer. I planned them, and the cobbler did the work."

Falk regarded him with something like wonder.

"But—why—what—that you have imagination and organizing ability I know. But from that to—"

"Well, the honour is mostly yours," admitted Miller.

"Mine!" Falk looked at him in astonishment.

"Yes, you were a sort of consultant for me," explained Miller. "Many's the evening I've sat and picked plans for my famous robberies out of you. And it was you who gave me the idea of the false teeth."

Falk smiled bitterly.

"Hm! Perhaps I've also given you the idea of your alias, as Nielsen, the printer?"

"No, I got that myself. One evening Elly told me of her worthy family. We were both in financial difficulties then and neither of us had moral scruples. She 'imported' me into the cobbler's cellar; I had the teeth made at a specialist's in Gother Street, and that and the glasses, together with a rather frowsy wig and a change of clothing, made me as you know—quite unrecognizable."

"And you committed the murders and robberies just to amuse yourself? and to give Elly Hansen fine clothes?"

"I can not deny that my calendar of sins is de-

void of redeeming moments. And yet, I tell you," he continued gravely, "that I love Elly. Not alone because she is a woman. But also because she is the bravest and most self-sacrificing friend a man ever had. And I ask of you, Falk, do all you can to keep her out of this— Well, I guess that's all. I suppose you've posted men both at the front and kitchen door?"

Falk shook his head:

"No, I came up here alone."

"Does Willing or the police know anything about it?"

"No, I'm the only one—besides Elly Hansen—that knows your secret."

Miller slowly pulled out a drawer in the writing-table and took from it a revolver. Falk looked at him calmly.

"It's loaded," said Miller harshly, "and makes very little noise. I could shoot you down like a dog! No one would hear. I could send Willing a false telegram that you had gone away for a few days. And in the meantime, I could flee to a foreign country and hide somewhere or other."

He veered suddenly and said in a tired way:

"But how would that help me? My description would be wired over the whole world. I would be only a worthless animal hunted by day and night.

And I have no sympathy at all for man-hunting when I am the quarry. Besides I like you—I have played and lost. Life is a game. I really ought—" He looked at the revolver but sighed "No," and handed it to Falk. Then he seized the telephone and asked for police headquarters.

"This is Preben Miller, the writer, at Old Kingsway!" he said. "I have murdered a man or two, and I wish you would come and get me at once. No, of course it isn't a joke! Only make sure the wagon is as comfortable as possible. I hate jolty cars—yes, Preben Miller—Old Kingsway."

He hung up.

Falk thoughtfully weighed the pistol in his hand.

"Do you feel no twinge of conscience?" he asked.

Miller shook his head.

"None, whatsoever. The cobbler was a scoundrel. And Saabye treated me shabbily when I asked him to loan me money that evening. He could have said no. But he made fun of me into the bargain."

Falk suddenly gave him the revolver:

"We have had so many cheery hours together," he said. "I will go into the room there in the meantime."

But Preben Miller smilingly refused to do it.

"No, one never knows what comes after. And a shattered cranium is so unappetizing!"

They sat in silence for some moments. The noise from the street rushed by them in a queer fashion. Suddenly Miller turned to the writing-table and put a manuscript into an envelope, addressed and stamped it.

"Promise me to put this in the mail," he said to Falk, and handed him the letter. "It is a review of Nissen's latest book. It is an excellent story. But the fellow detests me heartily. He will weep tears of blood over this review, I hope."

Falk saw that the letter was addressed to the editor of the paper for which Miller wrote criticisms. He put it in his pocket and promised to take care of it.

Miller's mischievous smile had changed to a grimace of barely concealed melancholy:

"If you in any way can," and he repeated his earlier plea, "then keep her out of it. For you don't belong to the police, and you don't have to tell them about the robberies. As for me, well, I am not a yarn spinner for nothing."

"I will do what I can," said Falk consolingly.

"And I would so much like to see her," he said

and lowered his eyes, "before I— Do you think it could be arranged—alone I mean?"

"I will speak to the District Attorney about it," promised Falk.

Miller nodded gratefully. An automobile stopped before the house:

"That damn note!" he muttered.

They both sat and listened to the steps coming up the stairs. They came nearer and nearer. Both Falk and Miller went out to open the door, but first Miller smoothed his hair which was rather untidy.

Two detectives were there. One of them knew Falk.

"I hope this isn't a joke, Mr. Falk."

"No, it isn't a joke," and Miller opened the door to the living-room.

The detectives went in behind Falk and Miller.

"Is this Preben Miller, the writer?" the taller of them asked.

Miller lit a cigarette, the last for many years.

"Yes, I am he," he nodded. "I murdered Mr. Saabye and the cobbler, Thorvald Hansen."

The detectives stared at him in stupefaction. His serenity was impressive. But Miller stretched his hands toward them:

"Here are my hands. Would you be good

enough to put hand-cuffs on them? I adore the dramatic. And I look forward to the solitude of the prison. There I will write my life's masterpiece!"

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